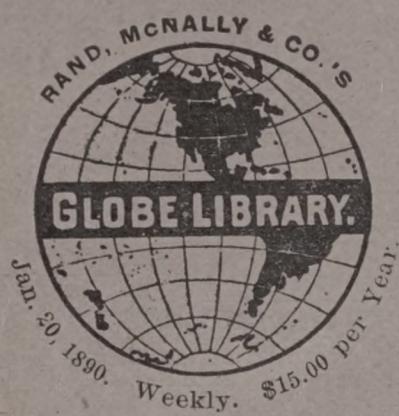


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UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.



Vol. I, No. 122.

Hayne Home.

BY

ANNA OLDFIELD WIGGS.

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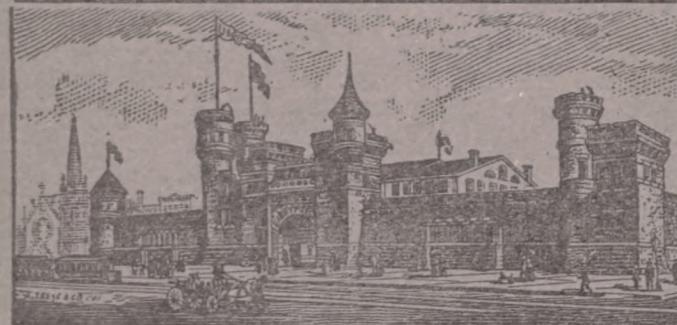
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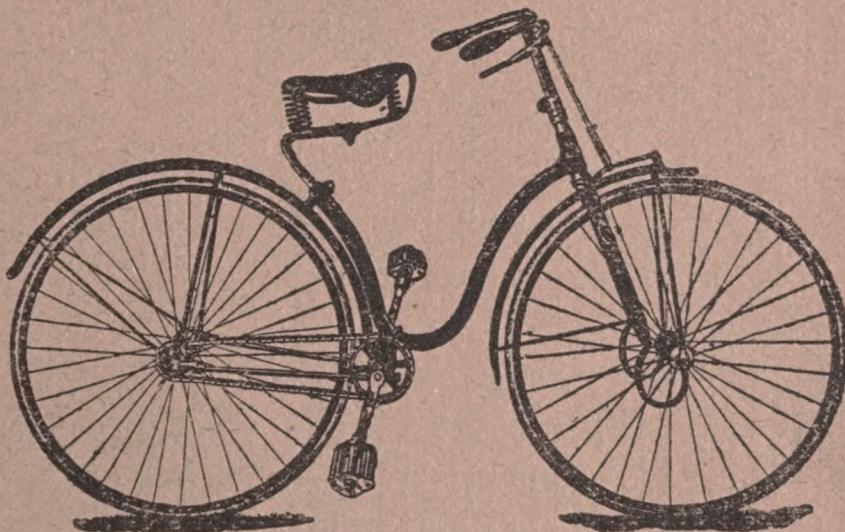
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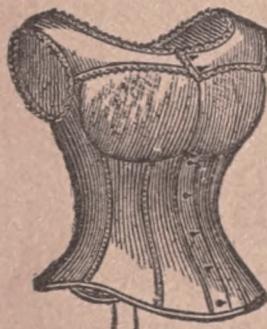
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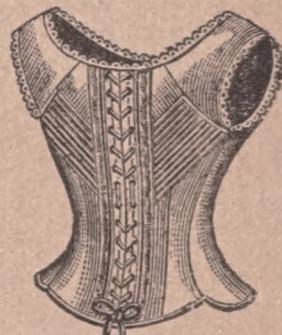


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HAYNE HOME.

CHAPTER I.

A SECRET MARRIAGE.

A syllable of dew that drips
From out a lily's laughing lips
Could not be sweeter than the word
I listened to, yet never heard.
For, oh, the woman hiding there
Within the shadows of her hair,
Spake to me in an undertone
So delicate my soul alone
But understood it as a moan
Of some weak melody of wind
A heavenward breeze had left behind.

—*James Whitcomb Riley.*

ON a dull, leaden morning in April, when the sky flashed forth vivid streaks of lightning, and the rain threatened every moment to descend in a torrent, a carriage, drawn by spirited black horses, dashed along a country road and stopped before a gray stone church, that rested on a little knoll whose green sward was thickly dotted with delicate harebells. The land around was, for the most part, low and marshy, but the old graveyard, with its time-stained marble slabs looming up dismally against the background of threatening

clouds, and the church, with its old-fashioned steeple pointing faithfully upwards, were on higher ground, and could be seen for miles around, gleaming in the sunlight or nestling calmly with their dead on this slight eminence, the target of the weather's humor.

The carriage stopped at the sun-warped stile, and the driver, instead of springing down and opening the door, called, in a stealthy voice, "Mr. Warwick! Hello!"

Immediately a young man and woman appeared at the door of the church, the former stepping mincingly over the walk that spanned the yard from the door to the stile. Opening the carriage door, he stood smiling and bowing, with his hands held at half-mast in the most approved fashion—to show their shapeliness. A young man with bright, handsome features and gentlemanly bearing descended from the carriage, and, turning to the man in waiting, remarked, pleasantly, "Everything is in readiness, I hope, Philip?"

"I am sorry, Lawrence," replied the gentleman addressed, "the minister has not come; yet it is not nine o'clock. I am sure he will be on time." Lawrence Hayne then assisted his companion—a sweet, shy-looking girl—to alight. Philip grasped her hands in both his, and exclaimed, with undue enthusiasm:

"Ah, my dear Adele! So glad to find you looking as usual—charming."

"I don't *feel* charming, Philip. I am a little bit frightened, I think," she replied, with a great attempt at brightness.

"Tush, child! You are over-excited; but a few minutes' rest will allay your fears. Come into the church; my wife is waiting to receive you."

She accepted his proffered arm and crossed over the

stile. Lawrence gave some directions to the man on the box, and, after bidding him hasten back, the former followed Philip Warwick and Adele Moore to the vine-covered door. Addressing the young lady, he said, kindly :

“ Adele, I think we have time to take a short walk before the minister arrives. Shall we do so, and try to brace up our courage ? ”

“ Yes, Lawrence. That little cemetery looks so quiet and pretty I should like to walk there awhile.” She smiled prettily at the couple standing under the woodbine as she took her lover’s arm and walked away.

Dick Turner was the coachman. When he descended the hill, at a speedy trot, he came to an opening in the wood, drew in the reins, and looked about him anxiously. Only for a moment, however. A few feet away he saw a horse in ambush, nibbling contentedly at the leaves about him. Dick sounded a short “ Hist ! ” between his teeth, answered immediately by “ Ahem ! ” and later a figure emerged from thick shrubbery, stepped lightly over the grassy soil to where the vehicle stood, and spoke patronizingly to Dick, who had jumped from the box and was tying the horses. “ They are at the church and are in a hurry,” remarked the coachman.

“ That is fortunate for me, as I have to solemnize a marriage this afternoon. Two weddings a day are rather encouraging for the young people. Can you tell me anything further relative to the condition of this marriage? I always like to know as much as possible about the circumstances, for sometimes these runaway matches are troublesome. ”

"They are that! But there is no objection to this, excepting that the lady's father was cut out by the boy's stepfather. The boy can't help that, you know."

Meanwhile Lawrence Hayne and his beautiful betrothed sauntered arm-in-arm through the neglected graveyard. The folds of her dark travelling dress brushed the tall grasses and passed softly over the edge of the mounds, as she occasionally leaned forward to read an inscription.

Lawrence looked manly and altogether fearless, with eyes full of admiration and love for the girl at his side. On the contrary, she was pale and very much frightened, and all her efforts to seem gay and happy showed her only how frail her courage really was. At length she turned to her companion and whispered, as though afraid the dead might rise up and listen :

"Lawrie, I am so afraid something terrible will follow such a marriage as this. Every peal of thunder sounds to me like an awful premonition."

"I am so sorry, dear Adele, that we should have chosen such a hapless day for our marriage, but I don't think you should let such dread fancies crowd happiness away. You would rather marry me this way than not at all, would you not?"

"Oh, dear, yes ; but——"

"Because if I thought your scrupulous conscience would reproach you, I should be sorry I persuaded you into it."

"I shall feel perfectly safe when I am your wife ; but even my marriage will not thwart papa much."

"When you are my wife your father will have to acknowledge himself thwarted. At any rate, a man who

will ruin his child's happiness for revenge ought to be thwarted."

"You have no reason to like him, I know, Lawrie, but don't speak ill of him, for I have left him for you."

For answer Lawrence raised her hand to his lips and allowed her to continue.

"Haven't you the least apprehension, Lawrence?"

"None in the least, dear. See, there, what a glorious burst of sunshine right over our heads; and see again, we are standing beside a grave that has clasped hands carved on it! That, we will assume, signifies our life together. Well, Old Sol is rather ungenerous after all. He has crept back again; but a cloudy wedding-day, while it is certainly unpleasant, is not portentous."

They had wandered into the churchyard, when Lawrence observed the little gloved hands folded carelessly on his arm, and cried:

"Why, Adele, no flowers? Who ever heard of a bride without flowers?" Stooping, he gathered a large cluster of harebells, and laughingly presented them to her. She took them, kissed them, and said, shyly:

"I wish these sweet little bells would ring out and foretell my future."

"What! Would you transform a harebell into a necromancer? No, my dear; let me foretell your future; have you any faith in my power?"

"I have unlimited faith in your intention, so you may begin your revelations. I am all attention."

"Well, fair lady—as the gypsies would say—you are soon to wed the man you love. Am I not right?" looking earnestly into her face.

"Yes, go on."

"And who loves you above every earthly thing?"

“I hope so. But you must not stop to see if you are correct. The gypsies don’t do that.”

“No? Well, then, you will go abroad and spend a year in Italy; you will be supremely happy, and, when you return, your now irate father will receive you with wide-open arms; you will settle down in a cosy, comfortable home and be the joy and light of your husband’s life ‘ever after.’ How do you like my prognostic harangue?”

“Very well; your prognostications must always be encouraging because of your hopeful temperament; I wish I were more so.”

“You will be, after you get among brighter associations. Hello! there comes Dick with the clergyman.”

“I was going to say if he did not come soon I should be obliged to gather a fresh bouquet, as these will not live long; they are such short-lived little things.”

“They must live to ring out your wedding march, since the good brethren of this parish would be scandalized to know that their organ had been subjected to anything so *giddy* as a wedding march.”

Tinkle, tinkle little bells, tinkle loudly to warn her of the grief that lies in store for her! Ring out your clearest notes, not in a wedding march, but a warning to tell her not to meet this awful doom; tinkle, bells—*quickly, loudly*, before she crosses the sacred threshold!

Ah! bells, you do not ring, and she passes through the vine-covered door, where the ivy thrusts out its delicate tendrils and kisses her face to tell her that it were better to live under the bane of her father’s stern will forever than throw herself before this unhappy fate! But though the ivy kisses her face and clings to her garments, and twines itself about her white throat, she heeds it not,

but enters the church where the shadows within those gloomy, molding walls flit before her, behind her, over her, and about her ; they nestle upon her white brow, and quiver and quake because they have no voice to cry out. But their pantomimic warning is as naught to her. The voice of the clergyman is weak, and falters as he, with fear and trembling, asks the questions of the service ; but she does not hear it ; she is listening for the voice of the flowers at her breast as they rise and fall with her quick breathing, shaking their tiny bells, but their chimes are so soft she cannot hear them !

“If there be any one here who knows just cause why these two may not be joined together, let him now speak or else hereafter forever hold his peace !”

Bells, you know the cruel deception and fraud that awaits her ! Tinkle *louder, louder !* Forbid the bans ! Shriek it out, so that the winds of heaven, kissing the fair young bride, may waft your warning to her ears !

Tinkle again and again, that your sweetest chimes may call on the all-wise God in supplication, to spare this poor helpless girl ! Ah, timid bells, you do not ring ! She does not know !

“What God hath joined together, let no man put asunder !”

CHAPTER II.

A BIT OF HISTORY.

Fool ! vain shalt thou guard thyself ! vain
Shall thy hope be to prosper ! Thy breed
Shall henceforth be subjects of greed,
And perish of loss and of pain !

Their schemes shall all wither in hand !
Ere long not an inch of the land
Shall be his that a Phillipson owns !
And in wretched Calgrath you never again
Shall be rid of us haunting its stones.

—*Mary Barker Dodge.*

HAYNE HOME was a beautiful homestead lying in the northern part of Kentucky, near the Ohio shore. The house was old and gray. There was moss on the roof ; and the trees were large and spread graciously over the spacious door-yard ; behind the house was an old-fashioned garden ; there were hollyhocks, primroses, cypress, and marigolds. The garden was encircled by a picket fence, old and bleached. The gravel walks, which cut the lawn into geometrical curves, were kept scrupulously clean, and the soft, green turf was the result of constant care.

The charming mistress of Hayne Home had been twice married ; when her first husband—James Hayne—died, he left her in moderately comfortable circumstances, the homestead surrounded by a few acres of rich land being the extent of her legacy. Her two chil-

dren were twin boys, six years old, whom she called Lawrence and Charles.

Mill Creek was a small stream of water dividing Hayne Home from Wicksburr, the home of John Warwick. This honorable and intelligent gentleman had survived his wife four years when James Hayne died. There was only one child left to brighten the hours in Mr. Warwick's home, and that child, Philip, was—I regret to say—a typical descendant of his mother's family, crafty and designing, with an imperturbable determination to gratify self at any cost. Since he had reached the age when boys first realize the gratification money begets, he had kept a vigilant eye on his father's enormous estate, knowing that, sooner or later, he would succeed his father and reign sole possessor of this magnificent domain. Affairs looked promising, certainly ; hitherto his father had unconsciously spurred Philip's vanity and anticipation by trying to infuse a little ambition into his ruinously laggard mind. And it is reasonable to suppose that with this desire in view, while the parent passed through vistas of vexation and disappointment, the son's hope was buoyed by the father's increasing energy.

Philip was twelve and Lawrence and Charlie Hayne were nine years old when John Warwick announced to Philip his intention of marrying the exemplary widow Hayne. Philip was wild with anger. His father coaxed, pleaded, and cajoled, but the boy would not be appeased ; he vehemently declared that he would not receive her as his superior ; threatened to make her life so distasteful here that she would be glad to resign after a short experience, and with such unpardonable effrontery defied his father that the latter in the heat of passion, declared if, by any action of Philip's, her life there

proved distasteful, Philip should be disinherited and Lawrence should reign instead.

This had the desired effect, inasmuch as it served to quench Philip's outward rebellion, but it only added fuel to the fire of hatred.

So they were married—these neighbors who had lived side by side so many years, little dreaming that the wedlock which seemed to them consistent with their habits and tastes would bring about such an undeserved calamity.

John Warwick formed a sincere attachment for his wife's son—Lawrence ; the boy's aptitude at learning, his adroitness at managing, and his interest in all mercantile pursuits, were all golden in the eyes of the step-father. He loved the boy, and that part of his nature which Philip with his unprincipled habits and indolence could never hope to win had been gratified by Lawrence's intellectual vigor.

Philip was too shrewd and too intensely suspicious not to observe this. It goaded him to hate Lawrence with all a boy's hot passion. He made many attempts to smirch the purity of Lawrence's character, but the latter, with his clear sense of honor, invariably came out unscathed, much to his step-father's delight.

At the time of Mrs. Hayne's marriage, another household in that community was thrown into chaos. Frederic Moore, an artist of reputed wealth, had paid marked attention to Mrs. Hayne, and on one occasion had driven over to her home, and, in a few elaborately prepared remarks, made known the desire of his heart—that she should be his wife. She kindly but firmly rejected him. He went away sad, but not discouraged ; the widow was, he thought, a little coy, but would eventually

make him the proudest man extant by permanently residing at his fireside.

But while he loitered concocting persuasive material, John Warwick won her. Frederic Moore exhibited intense chagrin when informed of the marriage, and being a man of relentless disposition—never having been known to forgive a wrong—allowed this one disappointment to embitter his whole life. The result was that thereafter existed a feud between the families that promised deplorable results.

Adele Moore was at this time six years old, too young to comprehend the mysterious developments about her ; she was much terrified at her father's ferocity upon this occasion, but could never fully understand the cause of their ruptured peace.

Years rolled on apace. The Warwick household was comparatively a happy one, inasmuch as Mr. Warwick and his wife were perfectly congenial, he being indubitably a most affectionate father and husband. His first marriage proved a mistake, and, after living several years with a woman of the former Mrs. Warwick's erratic disposition (pleased to-day with the identical thing that yesterday aroused all the ire in her unusually antagonistic nature) it is no wonder that this home, where everything seemed harmonious and cheerful, opened unto him an earthly paradise.

Do not imagine, dear reader, that their home was *perfect* in its harmony ; there was an *if* in that circle, just as there must be in every other affair of this world ; indeed, we would soon grow into mere mechanical functionaries if we were all perfect. So this pleasant little family had a *hitch*, and, as might be suspected, Philip created it. Notwithstanding the temporary fear he had

experienced at his father's threat, he had made himself particularly obtrusive to his step-mother. The peace and quiet were broken occasionally at first, but Mrs. Warwick was one woman among a thousand, and understood so well how to meet Philip's advances that, after awhile, he not only stood in awe of her, but acknowledged that she possessed a magnetism too strong for him to cope with.

But he would not or could not like her boys ; so a separation was deemed advisable, which was effected by Philip's going to school ; where he remained until he was twenty years old ; and, although he passed creditably and retained the respect of the students and faculty, yet it was evident that the most he had learned was to dress faultlessly, handle his cigarette gracefully, and poise his walking-stick after the latest code.

Philip was an immaculate dandy.

In the meantime, Lawrence and Adele, true to the characteristics of the human family, attempted to reach the grapes that hung highest, oblivious of the luscious fruit which hung just within their reach. There were a dozen pair of bright eyes resting on Lawrence's face from time to time. Lips had smiles for him and cheeks blushed rosy red at his approach. Yet he did not see these. He saw a face beyond that made his pulses thrill and heart beat fast, and told him plainer than words could have done that this was the one girl for him : and this girl was the daughter of his mother's adversary.

Capricious souls ! Going out to meet sorrow when gladness lies around you, waiting to be recognized !

CHAPTER III.

A STERN FATHER.

I hated—the world was a world full of demons ;
No face there but harbored a treacherous lie.
The skies were as midnight—the sun's face was hidden ;
I shrank from the scream of the seagulls near by.
The voice of the robin was harsh and discordant,
The lamb's bleat was savage—the dog's bark a howl,
I forgave not a foe, and with bent head and anger,
I passed all my friends with a dark, sullen scowl.

—*Hannah B. Gage.*

In order to make my narrative lucid I must continue the family history, but will be as brief as practicable.

Philip had been at home six months, when Lawrence and Charlie were sent away to school. Their vacation was fast approaching, when one day Frederic Moore astonished Adele by proclaiming his intention of sending her to Madame Maley's boarding school, and concluded by saying that, as soon as her education there was deemed complete, she should begin the study of painting, an accomplishment she particularly coveted.

She did not in the least regret leaving home ; on the contrary, she looked forward with enthusiasm to the time when she should be at liberty to consult her own wishes in preference to those of her irritable parent. Consequently, she hailed with pleasure his announcement, and assured him she would do all in her power to make her progress not only sure but speedy.

Much gratified at her ready acquiescence, he deemed

it best to strike while the iron was hot, and continued, cleverly :

“Then I would suggest, my dear Adele, that you start by next Saturday noon ; I shall be going to the city then, and shall take great satisfaction in seeing you safely ensconced in Madame Maley’s parlors. I shall write her immediately.”

Next Saturday at noon? And Lawrence would be home at five?

Her father’s words fell cold and hard upon her ears ; she did not dream that his arrangements were previously made, and that his mind was fixed as firmly as a stone wall. She timidly suggested that the best course would be for her to spend Sunday at home and start for school on Monday morning ; but her father would not hear of it ; at first he essayed to assume that he had no other object in thus hastening her departure than the fact of his having to go away, and the gratification it would afford him to personally introduce her to her future preceptress. Then, again, he urged that it would be a bad beginning to break in upon the first of the week, but she was so persistent in her entreaties, and appeared so grieved, that he became fearful lest he should yield, and perhaps, too, a bit of remorse stung him to anger, for he burst out in rudest tones, saying :

“Adele, not another word! I understand why you would like to remain at home over Sunday. Though you have stooped to some cunning devices to deceive me, you have not been so cunning as you imagine. I learned only a short time since that you had been holding clandestine meetings with that nasty little——”

“Papa, please do not!” cried Adele, springing up ;

but her father pushed her back, and with a gesture commanded silence. He glowered at her a moment ; then, with the most withering scorn, said :

“ If you were anything but the little, incipient chit that you are, I might feel uneasy. As it is, I *could* give you a good spanking and send you to bed. But I intend to put a stop to this right here, and the sooner you recognize my authority and respect it, the better it will be for you.”

“ But, papa,” implored Adele, “ he has done nothing to deserve your hatred. It is ungenerous of you to treat us so cruelly. If you were doing it for my good, I should not demur, but would thank you in the end for your consideration. As it is, your objections seem unfounded.”

“ Unfounded, girl ! When I hate him worse than any worm that crawls ! ”

Adele looked the contempt she felt, but replied with great calmness :

“ Father, Lawrence is honest, and is a true gentleman, as you very well know. Yet you hate him simply because his mother wou—— ”

“ *Adele Moore, be silent!* you impudent girl ; ” he cried, angrily, and the girl arose and walked toward the door, saying, sadly : “ Well, papa, to satisfy your cruel whim, I shall be ready to start on Saturday ; you evidently think that ‘ incipient little chits ’ have no sense of feeling ; if you will recall your own youth, you will be better able to judge. I have been told that you were an impassioned youth.”

Frederic Moore stood during this recital like one stunned ; he had never heard Adele express herself in an insolent manner before ; she had always been gentle,

so submissive and loving, that to hear her speak in such a spirited tone was something to create wonder. The last thrust, coming as it did in such reproachful reminder, was too much for Mr. Moore's patience ; frenzied, he rushed toward her, exclaiming :

“It makes no difference, my girl, what my youth was. I intend to mold yours to my own notion ; and it shall not be for a *Hayne*, either. You choose to thwart me by the assumption of a new rôle, Adele. I presume that is due to his influence and——”

“No,” she essayed to reply.

“Never mind ; his influence hereafter will amount to very little, since you shall be so effectually separated that you will learn to respect your father's wishes, and to address him properly.”

“Papa, one word more. You have been a good father to me in a financial way. So long as I come and go at your rather changeable fancy, and perform faithfully the offices which you choose to call a daughter's duty, you are respectful and kind—nothing more. But, papa, you forget that I have never had a sister in whom to confide, or a mother to whom I could go for counsel ; you never have allowed me to mingle with girls outside of the school-room, and you rarely ever deign to notice me yourself ; now, tell me, is it possible for a girl full of youth and mirth to associate with no one but a kind old servant, without turning imbecile—even if she does not do anything desperate ? What kind of a girl do you think I am ?”

Her father had no reply to make ; all she said was true ; yet he could have struck her for telling him the truth.

“Say, papa, what kind of a girl do you think I am ?”

"I think you are the most ungrateful girl Heaven ever sent. You do not appreciate the advantages you possess ; you have gotten some silly, romantic notions into your foolish head, and the advice of a poor, old-fashioned father has no more weight than a feather. If your *isolation* is the cause of your imbecility, perhaps your school-life will cure it. You are so anxious for female companions, you shall have them to your heart's content."

"It is too late now. My fate is sealed as firmly as iron."

"Don't begin to harp. You will leave here Saturday, at noon ; and there will be no whining about it, either. When Lawrence arrives, in the evening at six, he will, I presume, be amazed to find that he has been outwitted by an old man."

He took a grim satisfaction in the pain he inflicted.

The pathos in the deep, dark eyes, and the white, quivering lips, did not appeal to his sympathies.

Adele started to the door. Her father, like an automatic figure, followed her with his eyes. Upon reaching the threshold, she turned and bent upon him a look so cold and sad that it stung him worse than the severest rebuke ; and having contained himself as long as it were possible, he darted forward, and, grasping her arm in a vise-like grip, exclaimed : "Why, in the name of Fate, don't you say something ? "

"Fate has left me nothing to say."

"Then go to your room and get ready for your departure, and don't stand there like a petrified mummy !" he exclaimed furiously.

She went away without a word, and, when she reached her own room, threw herself down upon the floor and

cried, just as many other girls have cried when older heads have tried to govern younger hearts. Adele, poor child, thought no fate was ever so bad as hers. In after years she looked back to that day and wondered why she had wept over that separation, when there was grief in store for her that would consume all her tears.

But she did not know that life held realities stranger and sadder than fictitious romance. She had that to learn, and she learned it from experience.

When she had exhausted her strength, and found that by so doing, she was gaining nothing and doing herself an injustice, she got up and began an inspection of her wardrobe, which was really superior to that of any young lady in the vicinity. Her father took great satisfaction in seeing his daughter dressed well. In fact, he prided himself in anything that reflected credit on his bank account or liberal purse-strings.

They were sad days to Adele, and still sadder were those following her departure. She entered upon her school duties in an aimless sort of way; but, being naturally quick, requiring only about half the amount of study that her companions needed, she was able, without any difficulty, to keep pace with her class. She was always looking forward to her vacation, not that she longed to see her father and spend a month in the glare of his disagreeableness; yet the longing for home was strong within her, just as much so as though her home awaited her with all the allurements that girls are wont to enjoy.

The word "home" covers a myriad of circumstances. Compare them! It is a vain attempt. It is not wealth that constitutes home: for the house may be old, with tattered walls and an old-fashioned white-washed fence

enclosing a garden of gaudy flowers. Yet you were born there. The house is the dearest spot on earth, and the flowers smell sweeter than any you have seen since. There may be no piano standing majestically in the parlor, but there is music in the voice that lulls the baby to sleep, and to you that music is sweeter than the instrument's artificial tones. The parlor may be the only room in the house, and made to fill all the appointments of home, but there is rest in the splint-bottom chairs, comfort in the little weekly paper, contentment in the faces about you, and amusement in the prattle of the children's tongues. There is, perhaps, only one sickly candle to shed its faint light upon your work, but the blazing logs in the old-fashioned fireplace crackle and snap so merrily, and the flames dance and leap so brightly, that the room really seems well-lighted and, when peopled with these four attributes, contentment, industry, peace, and love, does it not form the real picture of Home?

Prosperity is certainly to be desired. We all grasp for it; thrust out our hands for it. But prosperity and contentment seldom go hand in hand, and that is why so many of our palatial homes seem so cold. They are brilliantly illumined, thoroughly heated, and bounteously supplied, but, in the absence of love, contentment cannot abide; and in the absence of the latter the illumination, the heat, the glare, and glitter are cold as steel, and cannot warm the heart. So, after all, the latter picture is only one of habitation. The home picture contains happiness, contentment, and love.

We will pass over the long days of school-life; the many anxious hours passed at the window; the vacations; home longed for, yet so eagerly fled from; and the occasional note or bouquet which came from Law-

rence through some mutual friend, to cheer Adele's flagging spirits, and to encourage her to fight for the end so near at hand.

They did not know how sad the ending to their bright dream would be. We never know until it is too late.

Adele had reached her twentieth year, and Lawrence was twenty-three when the former returned from school. Days of happiness followed, wherein they were allotted a few hours of social enjoyment; but, like a fell destroyer, down came the arm of the law, in the Moore household, and its victim, to prevent being crushed beneath its weight, necessarily held herself aloof from the cause of her parent's anger, and bided her time.

When Philip had been married about a year, to a bright-eyed little wife of whom he was tolerably fond, Lawrence called one morning at his house, and, in the course of their conversation, Adele's name was mentioned, which turned their attention to the perplexities the lovers were obliged to surmount in order to have the least opportunity of seeing each other. Philip asked rather gruffly: "Well, Loll, how have you been managing your unfortunate affair lately?"

"Poorly enough. In fact, Phil, I am just desperate enough to do something furious."

"Well, why *don't* you do something? Great Scott! Do you suppose I would sit around here, like a whipped schoolboy, and bend when old Moore said 'bend'? Not much."

"No, Phil, I am sure you would not. But I am such a drone I am sure I could never concoct the simplest plan without making a dead failure of the whole business. You are clever at schemes."

“Am I? Well, then, why don’t you let me scheme for you?”

“What good does it do, Phil?—meet and chat a half-hour and let the poor girl live in mortal terror for a fortnight lest her father find us out and send her to the antipodes.”

“It’s doggedly mean in old Moore, anyhow.”

“Yes, it’s mean, but it can’t be helped.”

“Yes, it can be helped, if you will not be a ninny, Why don’t you get married?” Philip asked with the utmost indifference.

“Get married, and never see my wife afterward. No, thank you.”

“*He* could not take her away from you, for you are both of age. Get married, Loll. I will help you, and when you are gone on your wedding-trip old Moore can entertain himself by kicking himself tired.”

“Mr. Moore would never forgive Adele, and she would always be unhappy. Besides, how should I accomplish it? Our pastor would not consent to do it, because he and Mr. Moore were great friends; and, beside, he is so very conscientious,” Lawrence remarked, frankly.

“Well, let me fix it, Lawrence. I am sure I can arrange it satisfactorily. I will send to town for a clergyman, and we can all meet at Woodale Chapel some morning, early enough for you to catch the nine o’clock train for the city. Then here is your chance to take that trip to Italy you have been planning ever since you were in knee pants. Pshaw! I could have had this arranged long ago, and been half-forgiven by this time.”

“I never hope to be forgiven. If I get the girl I

will have to be happy without the forgiveness; can't have everything, you know?"

After a moment's reflection, he added: "I will speak to Adele about it, and abide by her decision."

"She don't think much of you if she won't do that much for you," Philip sarcastically observed.

"The amount of affection she lavishes upon me does not worry me one bit," Lawrence replied in the same tone, but with a faint smile.

Shortly after this conversation took place Lawrence went home. He met Charlie in the garden, and sat down upon a rustic bench to have a smoke and a chat with him. As Lawrence's mind was filled with thoughts of his betrothed and their ill-success, the conversation naturally reverted to his visit to Philip, and his offer of assistance.

"Charlie," he began, "don't you think we have misjudged Phil? The old boy is a little queer, to be sure, but, after all, he is made of good stuff. I am really afraid we have been too willing to look upon his bad qualities in preference to his good ones. Are you not?"

"No, I can't say that I am," Charlie replied, bluntly.

"Well, now, look here, Charlie. He has offered to help me out of my present dilemma and get me away from here to escape Mr. Moore's wrath, knowing at the same time that he will suffer more or less annoyance for being implicated in it. Is that not clever, now?"

"Looks clever, certainly," doggedly answered Charlie.

"You must not forget, Charlie, that *you* refused to help me once when I wished to bring Adele up to Col-

lege Mount, just to have one happy, peaceful day with her."

"*I do not forget*, Loll, that I refused to help you in a pleasure that would subsequently ruin her character. Adele would trust you to the ends of the earth, and you are so foolishly impulsive, Loll. You would risk your life for a day's frolic."

"Well, that has nothing to do with Phil's kindness ; he has shown himself to be the *real* friend after all. And from this time on I am his friend, and I hope to repay him for some of my past ugliness."

Charlie drummed on the arm of the rustic seat, and complacently surveyed the flower-stalks standing bare and naked, waiting for May with her sweet warm air and warm sun to come and open the prison-doors and send forth buds and bloom.

Lawrence continued, not in the least abashed at his brother's silence :

"Charlie, I wish you were more easily won over. You——"

"Wish you were *not* so easily won over."

"But, boy, it is so ungenerous to cling to a prejudice so persistently. You never give anybody a chance to redeem himself."

"Lawrence," and Charlie was in earnest now, "I don't cling to them. My prejudices cling to me ; I could no more shake them off than I could shake this tree. I don't form my opinions hastily. If you remember, you were the first to complain of Phil's misdemeanors, while I refused to see them ; but after I had studied him I learned him, and if I am prejudiced it is because I think I have a good reason to be."

"Well, then, Charlie, nurse your pet theory to your

heart's satisfaction ; I shall go to Phil for the favor my brother declines to grant."

"I have not refused to help you get married, Loll ; I should have done that long ago ; but not in partnership with *him*."

"Don't put yourself to any uneasiness," Lawrence replied, with evident displeasure ; "I can get on without your services very well, since such things are not to your taste," and sauntered off toward the house.

Charlie turned into the lane and wandered aimlessly down toward the little stream of water which had listened to so many happy tales of love, so many heart-aches, and read the inner pages of so many lives.

As he walks indolently along one would not turn to look at him twice, as would perhaps be the case were Lawrence in his place. Lawrence was tall and broad-shouldered. His appearance was striking. His eyes were of the clearest sparkling blue ; fringed with fair lashes corresponding with the hair whose mischievous ripples could not hide the contour of the well-poised head. He always met his friends with a smile, not infrequently accompanied by a charge of railery.

Charlie was the exact opposite. With eyes and hair jetty black, and a complexion as rich as a ripe peach, he was never animated in his manner—very good-humored but droll. He never spoke one word more than was necessary to frame his meaning. But his most charming trait was his kind-heartedness, though whatever generous deeds he may have done would never be known through any action of his own.

Being shrewd in his calculations of human nature, it was after months of careful observation that he came to distrust his step-brother, and to experience a keen dis-

like for him. But, being generous as well as sagacious, he wisely forebore mentioning to any one the idea he had formed of Philip's nature.

As Charlie strolled languidly down the lane this morning, trying to plant ideas in his mind that might sprout and develop into a scheme to help Lawrence, he saw no one, nor heard Philip's footsteps fall softly upon the grass, until he had thrust his shoulder against Philip's broad chest.

The latter seemed to enjoy the incident, and laughed heartily over it, whereas Charlie could see nothing amusing in it at all.

With his usual preface—"Well!" Philip remarked, "I thought you were walking with your eyes shut."

"No; thinking."

"Thinking? Well, dear me, I did not know you ever indulged," with unveiled ridicule, but, receiving no answer, continued: "By the way, Charlie, I want to talk with you. Let us walk down to the creek."

"Just where I was going."

"Well, say, Charles, it is about Loll that I wish to talk."

"So? Go on; I am listening."

"You are just as anxious to help him out of this unhappy strait as I am; are you not?" questioned Philip.

"Think I am," with a touch of scorn, "if it will not lead him into a worse strait."

"It can't do that if we help them to get married. We can arrange it so slyly that old Moore can't have a suspicion of it until they are safely out of this neighborhood and about to sail for Italy. Then the old gentleman can spout all he wants to."

“ But how can we effect the arrangements ? ”

“ Well, I had thought this would be a good plan : To send one of the servants up to town for a minister and instruct him to meet us at Woodale some morning about eight o’clock, and while my wife and I wait upon them at the church, Dick can drive, and you can either meet them there or come down with them in the carriage.”

While Philip talked he watched Charlie out of the corner of his eye.

“ Phil, why in the nation are you so anxious to help Loll all at once ? ”

A vinegar smile accompanied Philip’s answer.

“ All at once ? Well, my boy, if you will allow me, Loll was always my favorite.”

“ Oh, of course. *I* never did aspire to the honor.”

“ Never craved it, either, did you ? ”

“ No. Could not digest it. But that is not answering my question. What motive prompts you to want to get Loll married ? Just to see her father wreak his revenge upon them ? ”

“ Why should *I* wish to see them suffer ? ” Philip exclaimed, with an effort to stifle his anger. “ I did not use to like you boys very well ; but don’t you suppose a fellow can outgrow those childish prejudices ? ”

“ *I can’t.* ”

“ Well, don’t judge everyone else by your own faults. Why do you wonder at my impulse, and ask me such an unkind question ? ”

“ Because it seems strange to me that, after being cut out by a fellow, you should try so hard to help him. Perhaps you want to pour coals of fire upon his

head? You would burn a tunnel clear through to his heels at this rate."

"Charlie Hayne, you have assumed that Loll cut me out. Will you tell me how?"

"Why, Phil, everybody knows that you tried to get Adele."

Philip was white to the lips, and panting like a madman.

"Now, you swallow that, or I'll——"

Charlie put up his hand, and said, coolly: "Don't do anything rash, Phil. You have said barbarous things to me, and I never attempted to strike you."

Philip stepped back, and, with a look of intense scorn, replied: "No, you coward, you would not lift your finger to save yourself from perdition." He walked away a few feet, and, coming back, drew a long breath, and asked, with affected calmness: "Well, are you going to help me?"

"Help you in such a nasty plot as you are hatching? *No!* I will be helping you out of the country when your infernal business is found out."

Philip put his hand on his hip-pocket, and whispered hoarsely: "What infernal business?"

"I don't know, Phil, what it is, but it reminds me of the pear that the old fruit-vender gave Folle Farine. It looks nice, but, having been given gratuitously, it *must* be rotten somewhere."

Philip stood perfectly rigid, and never moved his eyes from Charlie's face.

"I don't know, Phil, what your scheme is, but it is a dead shot at Loll, and I will see you in Halifax before I will help you."

When he had finished speaking he turned and walked

a few steps toward the water. Philip stepped after him, and said: "Charles, you will take that back, or I—"

"You will what?" cried Charlie, wheeling around to face him. He looked directly into the muzzle of a revolver.

"Shoot the lying head off of you!"

Charlie, fearing he meant to fire, threw up his hand just as Philip drew the trigger, the action turning the weapon directly toward Philip's shoulder; so that the ball intended for Charlie's head lodged in Philip's left shoulder. He fell limp and bleeding to the ground. At that moment a man sprang over the hedge behind them, and, without one word, dropped at Philip's side, and began to tear away his clothing. Philip was unconscious, and lay like a corpse. Charles, too stunned to speak for awhile, now cried, "O Dick, I did not mean to do it! I did not shoot him."

"Hush, Charles. I saw it all; he is not badly hurt, but we must get him home as soon as possible."

Charlie stood nervously rubbing his hands together for a moment; then suddenly exclaimed: "Yes, let's go home. Come, Dick, we can carry him on this big plank." They took a wide board which was sometimes used for a platform when the water was high, and, placing him upon it, started toward Philip's home. Dick suggested that someone had best tell Mary about it as she was particularly nervous, and the shock would make her perfectly wild with fear. But Charlie told him that Mary was not at home, and would not be until after luncheon, so they carried their burden home, and with the assistance of the housekeeper got him safely to bed, and sent for the doctor immediately. The ball

had not gone deep, and, after a tedious probing, was extracted. In a few minutes more Philip had regained consciousness. They did not send for Mary, the house-keeper averring that she would make matters worse, and, being competent herself to do everything, they all agreed to keep Mary in ignorance of it until she should arrive home. When the servants gathered around to see the unconscious man they had scores of questions to ask as to the cause of the accident, and, when told that Philip had *aimed at a mark*, and, missing it, had struck his own shoulder, they expressed their astonishment at the idea of as good a marksman as Mr. Warwich missing his aim so far as to shoot his own shoulder. By this time Philip began to show signs of returning consciousness, and all inquiries were suspended until he was able to answer them himself. When he opened his eyes and saw the doctor's face and others about him, it was some little time before he could remember the cause of his pain and sick feeling.

"Are you in much pain, Mr. Warwich?" the doctor inquired.

"Horrible. Let me see, I shot——"

"Did you shoot yourself, Mr. Warwich?"

"How did I get home?" he asked, ignoring the doctor's question.

Thinking his mind wandered, they replied: "Charlie——"

"Is Charlie here?" Philip queried, eagerly.

"Yes, Philip. Tell us who shot you; we must find out, you know."

Charlie arose from his chair, and looked straight at Philip, who rather shrank from the earnest look bent upon him, and replied:

"It was an accident; I fired the shot myself."

Every one drew a long breath of relief, but inadvertently glanced at Charles who had been seen looking at Philip in that menacing manner, and the doctor avowed to himself that there was a screw loose somewhere, and that Charlie had something to do with the shooting.

One by one they vacated the room, until no one remained but Dick and Charlie. Philip had not observed the former, and, believing that he was quite alone with his step-brother, remarked, with an effort:

"You did not tell them how it happened, Charles?"

"No, of course I did not," Charlie answered, piqued to think that even such a man as Philip should question his sense of honor.

Philip, not heeding the injured tone, went on heartlessly:

"I observed, Charles, that they all looked doubtful when I said that I fired the shot."

"Did they? I wonder what they could have meant?" he answered, with assumed innocence.

"Meant?" Philip replied. "Why they meant that every deuced one of them thought I 'prevaricated.'"

"You take such an assumption coolly."

"I wanted them to think it."

"And why?"

"When you attempt to interfere with my affairs, you will find out."

Dick jumped up to defend Charlie against such a shameful abuse as the last thrust, but the latter signified with his hand that he did not desire Philip to know of the presence of a third party. So Dick sat down, and, shortly after, Mary came home and almost went into hysterics at the news of the accident.

The boys did not remain long. As Charlie passed the bed upon which Philip lay, the latter said, mockingly, "Will you help me *now*, Charlie?"

"*No, I will not help you now.*"

CHAPTER IV.

CHARLIE'S DEPARTURE.

Dear country home ! can I forget
The least of thy sweet trifles—
The window vines which clamber yet,
Whose blooms the bee still rifles ;
The roadside blackberries growing ripe,
And in the wood the Indian pipe ?

—R. H. Stoddard.

PRUDENCE WELLS was a woman old enough to be Charlie's mother. She had been their nurse when the boys were toddling babies, and had remained with the family up to the time of her mistress' second marriage. Prudence was one of those rare paragons of femininity who possess a sweet mixture of common-sense and adaptability. She had a knack of cheating accidents by her always ready appliances, and, being recognized as something above the average servant, had gradually become one of the family, until now even the neighbors frequently called her Aunt Prue. When Mrs. Warwich left Hayne Home for Wicksburr, Prudence and her husband, the gardener, took possession of the old home-stead, and, in their old-fashioned, queer way, were happy and much respected.

Charlie had always been Aunt Prue's favorite ; not because of any outward attractiveness, but because

Laurie, with his great blue eyes and sunny hair, won hearts everywhere, while poor, plain, little Charlie was often neglected by all but Aunt Prue. It may have been only a sympathetic preference upon her part, but it was sweet to the boy, and he never forgot it. It was no unusual thing for Charlie, since he had grown into manhood, to go to his old nurse and confide his grievances.

So it happened that, one night, two weeks after the accident to Philip, Charlie, having nothing at hand to break the tedium of the day, walked over to Aunt Prue's, promising himself a nice little chat with that estimable individual. As he crossed her threshold he found her industriously preparing an appetizing meal.

"Good-evening, Aunt Prue. Busy with your dinner? Oh, I am just in time for one of those nice hot biscuits."

Turning round, and smiling in her grim fashion, she said: "Yes, Charlie. Just in time. Come in."

"Your cooking suits my palate, Aunt Prue, better than anyone else's. The sight of your table and the odor of your cooking invariably sharpens my appetite."

"Yuh'd better come an' stay with us, Charlie. Yuh haint no idee how lonesome-like we git, sometimes, John an' me."

"But you have Dick. I should think such a jolly fellow as he is would be a whole crowd."

"No, he haint, Charlie. Dick's a first-rate feller, and we've tuk to 'im right smart—more'n I thought we ever could; but, land sakes, Charlie, he hain't no hand to sit down an' talk a spell with old folks like me 'n' John."

"No ; Dick is too full of activity to sit down and talk merely. He is very much attached to you, Aunt Prue."

"Yes, quite a bit," she replied, with pride. "Charlie, what yuh goin' to do this summer ?" she asked, suddenly.

"I have a great mind to take a trip through the North, Aunt Prue. I must either do that or go to town and engage in business."

"What fur ?" she asked, with habitual curtness.

"Well, because I am getting too restless for this kind of a life. It is too stagnant for me. Goodness, I shall be covered with blue-mold before long."

"Wouldn't be in no hurry to travel, Charlie. It's mighty bad fur young men to go a-travelin'. Sometimes they turn out bad ; and, anyhow, they allus git unsettled like."

"Oh, as for that, I couldn't get any more unsettled than I am, and I must do something."

"What does your mother say ?"

"Hates awfully for me to go ; but don't blame me."

At this juncture Dick Turner came into the room ; a great, stalwart, good-natured country boy, who had, in his infancy, been given by his dying mother to Aunt Prue ; and Dick, though quite competent to earn a livelihood, remained on the farm, and did menial service rather than leave the crisp, queer old lady who had always been so kind.

"Hear I am, Auntie, hungry as a black bear."

"You allus air, Dick. Yuh've got the beatenest appetite I ever see."

Dick doffed his hat respectfully to Charlie.

The boys had all grown up together, Dick being three

years younger than the Hayne twins ; but Aunt Prue had never allowed Dick to treat the boys familiarly, and since he was grown their friendliness never caused him to forget that he was only their servant's *protégé*, and that there could be nothing more than the respect felt between servant and master.

"Good-evening, Charles. I am glad to find you here. I have something to say to you."

"So ? What is it ?"

"This evening, while putting away Philip's horse, I overheard a conversation which either he wanted me to hear or else he thought I could not hear, don't know which ; but, anyway, he gave you blazes."

"*Me ?*" cried Charlie. "What about ?"

"The shooting. He was telling Mary and her father about it, and said that you aimed the shot at his head, and that he struck the revolver to ward off the blow, and sent it into his shoulder."

"Did he say that, Dick ?"

"Yes, he did. And Mary said : 'Why, Phil, why did you not tell us this before ?' And Phil said : 'Well, Mary, his mother is my father's wife, and I could not at first bear the idea of bringing such disgrace upon their gray heads. But that little puppet is getting too obtrusive of late, and I intend to inform him that he is one too many—if he don't keep inside his own limit.'"

"S'pose he means by that, if I don't mind my own business, the world is wide, and there is more room outside of Hayne Home than in. What have I done ?"

"I am afraid he means trouble, Charles," remarked Dick, regretfully.

"Trouble ? He can't cause me an ounce that won't

bring him a pound ; but the worst part is, I hate to 'fight' my own family, and if he accuses me, why, in self-defense, I must accuse him ; and, as no one would believe me, inasmuch as the wound was a peculiar self-inflicted one, I should——"

"You could prove your innocence by me," Dick cried, eagerly.

"Yes, thank, you, Dick, I could drag you into it ; and there would be scandal and disgrace and sorrow for mother, and no end of annoyance to you and Aunt Prue." Turning to the latter, he said : "Can't you tell a fellow what to do, Aunt Prue ?"

The good little woman addressed had heard every word, but made no sign of having heard. She went on with her dinner, her mouth pursed up in the most comical fashion—a habit of hers when in deep thought. Her suggestions always came like electric shocks, and this one was no exception :

"Stand up together—you two !"

"What for ?" inquired Charlie.

"Cause !" was her all-sufficient answer.

"Good reason !" commented Dick, laughingly, as they arose and stood before her for inspection.

She surveyed them critically for a moment ; afterward she turned away and went about her duties, without the least intimation that she was through with her examination.

The young men looked at each other and smiled, and Dick called, in his cheery voice : "Next !" which had the effect of recalling Prudence to their aid :

"Yuh'd better go a-trav'lin' Charlie."

"Oh, no, Aunt Prue, *not now*!"

"Why not?" she asked, imperiously.

"Run away? Too cowardly!"

"No, 'taint, neither. They haint 'cused yuh yit, an' everybody knows yuh've been dyin' to see them there furrin parts, an' this is yer time to go."

"Oh, well, I can't——"

"Yes, but you will. I think it's best."

"No, I won't run off; fight first!"

"Well, then, come an' set down to dinner. Dick, call John, an' come on to the table, an' I'll tell you what I think I'll do."

They sit down to the table, and while the three kind-hearted people wait upon and serve Charlie to flaky biscuit and honey, nice sweet ham, with an omelette of the freshest eggs, Aunt Prue unfolds a plan which falls in welcome showers upon their ears.

The following day Charlie announces his intention of traveling for a couple of months, and on the next Saturday Charlie is driven up to the city to take the train, and Dick is his driver.

CHAPTER V.

CRONIE AND DICK.

And I thirst the loved forms to see,
And I stretch my fond arms around,
And I catch but a shapeless sound,
For the living are ghosts to me.

—*Lord Lytton.*

WITH Charlie gone and Philip recovered there was really nothing to bar the progress of a speedy marriage.

Lawrence was as wax in Philip's hands, and the sweet, trusting Adele readily acquiesced to any arrangement that Lawrence might suggest. The latter and Philip had

agreed upon a plan for the consummation of their hopes, and all that was to be done was to send for the minister. Philip, in passing down the lane, met Cronie, an old Irishman, who had been in their employ when Philip's mother lived. This rheumatic and decrepit old man came shuffling along, and would have passed with his customary "Morning!" but was arrested by Philip, who had something to say.

Cronie was a trifle deaf, consequently it required more than a mere movement of the lips to make him understand. Drawing him aside, Philip cast stealthy glances in every direction to assure himself that they were quite alone. Seeing no one, he proceeded to unfold a plot as atrocious as a vile imagination, spurred by a heart full of revenge, could conjure. Philip hesitated at first; his course was not so clearly mapped out as he wished, but he trusted to Cronie's shortsightedness and dull comprehension to help him out.

"Cronie," he began, cautiously, "you have lots of chums in town who would be glad to make a dollar or two extra, haven't you?"

"Sure, yees, Misthur Warwich."

"Well, don't you think, Cronie, that you could get some fellow to come down here and play parson for me if I paid him handsomely?"

Cronie scratched his head and shut one eye.

"Play phat?"

"Play preacher—pretend that he is a preacher."

"An, sure, phat fur?" he asked, stupidly.

Philip was getting impatient, but it would not do to let Cronie see it; there was none else whom he would dare ask such a favor from. So he bit the end of his cigarette, lifted his hat a couple of times by way of re-

pressing his rising temper ; and mentally called Cronie a dolt.

“ Now, look here, Cronie, I didn’t care to enter into details, as the affair is not mine ; I am simply trying to help another fellow. But I’ll explain it to you, so that you will make no mistake—though, mind you, Cronie, it is in confidence—not one word about it to anyone, not for your life. There is a young couple near here who have been married for several months, but their families don’t know it ; excepting that her mother has received an intimation of it some way, and has asserted that the marriage was not legal, and they cannot prove it to her, for they are too far away from the records. Well, now, what they want is to have the ceremony performed again, to please the girl’s mother, and, you see, if they employ our minister, the marriage will soon leak out—

“ An’ sure, if the gairl’s folk know it, whoy in the airth do they want to kape it sthile yit ? ”

“ Why, indeed ? ” Philip hesitated, and chewed the end of his cigar again. After a moment’s reflection, he said :

“ Why, you see, Cronie, the boy is not twenty-one yet, and can’t get his money until he *is* twenty-one, and his folks could make it mighty hot for him ; so all they want is to go through another ceremony ; then her mother will let her alone.”

“ Twouldn’t do, Oi reckon, to have a regular pracher ? ”

“ No, no, of course not ; ’twould get into the papers and records by that, don’t you see ? ”

Cronie did not see, but he said he did. Philip’s tale seemed thin to him, but he had done favors for Philip—

that were more attenuated than this, and so far they had brought him no trouble. So he listened attentively while his master explained to him the part he was to perform. The old man opened his eyes in stupid amazement when told that he was to go up to the city and employ one of his friends for the principal part of the drama.

“*Me go to town at noight?*—an ould mon loike me? Now Misther Warweech, Oi ain’t ben theyer fur foive years, and it’s mesil ’at ’ud git befuddled in their sthraights and corners, sure.”

“Ah, Cronie, don’t harp ; who’s been a better friend to you than I have? Would I ask you to do anything that would get you into danger? Now, brace up and do as I tell you! Go up on the night train, and go straight to somebody’s house, whom you think will do this job for \$25 or \$30, and tell him to dress neatly and becomingly, and to study the service well. He must be at Woodale church at *nine o’clock sharp*, to-morrow morning. I am sure, Cronie, I can trust you to do this thing properly.” He listened a moment, and said, softly. “Go on, and don’t forget.”

Philip retraced his steps homeward, and Cronie shuffled at a limping gait down toward the foot of the lane. He always talked to himself, and, not knowing how loudly he spoke, was apt to make his words fatally distinct sometimes. On this occasion, excitement lent zest to his mutterings, and quite audibly he exclaimed :

“Sendin’ an ould mon loike mesil to the city in the dead o’ the noight. Sure an’ Oi’ll niver git back aloive at all.”

“What’s the matter, Cronie?”

It was Dick’s voice that spoke ; and Dick’s face that

peered at the old man through the hedge, and though the opening through which he looked was small, yet his face was plainly pictured in the foliage.

“*Matthur, Dick?* Oi am to go sthumblin’ me way into the town, after the sun is down, an’ the sthraits are dairk, an’ git a mon to coum an’—sure an’ it’s mesil ’at’s after fergettin’ me blissid orders.”

“Never mind, Cronie, I heard your orders anyhow, and say, Cronie, how would you like for me to do that errand for you!”

“Hey?”

“Aunt Prue says she wants some things from town this week, and I’ll do that for you. I heard what he said, and I know lots of fellows that I am sure would do it.”

“Faith, Dick; it’s me head as ’ud git sphlit fer doin’ the loikes o’ that.”

“I’ll answer for your head. You just go over to Aunt Prue’s and stay ’till I get back, and Mr. Warwich will never know the difference.”

Cronie was easily won over; and on the following morning the marriage, recorded in the opening chapter, took place, and two lives, which were made to be beautiful and full of joy, were, by this secret marriage, wrecked and marred.

* * * * *

The ceremony being ended, the bridal-party began making preparations for hasty departure.

There was no register in the church, but the minister walked into the pulpit, wrote something, then motioned Mary Warwich to come to him.

She glanced around for her husband, but Philip had gone to get his own buggy to the door to avoid delay.

"Madam," the clergyman said, "you will be kind enough to sign your name as one of the witnesses. We want another. Where is your husband?"

Mary knew Philip would not relish a descent from the buggy and an extra dash through the wet grass, so she hastened to say that her husband had gone out, and inquired if this young man would not do as well.

"Certainly," replied the minister, addressing Dick. "Come here, if you please, and sign this certificate, and then give it to Mrs. Hayne. As it is late, I will bid you good-morning." With a few pleasant words to Adele the man passed out of the house, and mounting his horse, dashed down the road and out of sight.

Dick penned a hasty signature, smiling broadly meanwhile; when he had given it the final stroke, he folded it hastily and thrust it into his pocket; then hurriedly left the house, to bring the carriage to the door.

The rain was pattering softly on the warped shingles, and seemed singing a melancholy song, so solemn and death-like that Adele would gladly have closed her ears to shut out the sound.

Dick had driven up to the stile with the carriage, and Lawrence had just emerged from the vine-covered door with his fair young wife leaning upon his arm, when their ears were pierced by a peal of thunder, long and loud; and the lightning blazed around them ominously. As they stepped out upon the damp ground, a few large rain-drops fell upon Adele's face. They seemed like cool sweet touches of friendly hands, and bathed her heated temples and burning eyelids.

But the thunder, and the flashes of lightning!

All else seemed so still, no one had aught to say. There was no sound but the banging of the carriage

door until the horses put their feet down upon the stony ground and started away. The good-byes were said quietly. After they were well on the way, Adele, to break the awful stillness, said, shiveringly :

“What a black marriage morn !”

“Yes, it is dark, Adele, but let us hope that the clouds have silver linings.”

“You are so hopeful, Lawrence ; I hope constant association with you will dispel my moroseness. But, indeed, I have always been so prejudiced against secret marriages that my own fills me with dread.”

“I should not have insisted upon this course, Adele, if there had been even a shadow of hope that your father would ever consent ; but why wait and waste all these years in a vain hope that he will relent ? We have done nothing that is not justifiable under the circumstances.”

“But I never—really never—have in my experience seen a marriage of this kind turn out well. They always end so disastrously.”

“Oh, no, dear, not always. That is just because people usually point out these marriages as examples. On the other hand—where parents give their children away in marriage, willingly, and perhaps make a magnificent display of it—if, later on, that couple are unfortunate, and do not live happily, the world, or at least that malicious portion of it that does nothing but criticise, falls upon them with exultant criticisms, and the atmosphere is smoky with ‘I told you so’s’ and ‘*mesalliance*,’ etc. The form of the nuptials, dear, has nothing to do with it.”

“It is refreshing to hear you say so, Lawrence, and I’ll try to see it your way, anyhow. It must be a great

deal *more comfortable*," she replied, with an effort at brightness.

As it is not customary to accompany the "happy pair," we will not follow them to Italy, but will bid them farewell and *bon voyage* as they cross the gang plank of the steamer *Trust*.

* * * * *

Scarcely one out of ten of us can form an exact estimate of futurity. Many persons cling to the belief that circumstances are like dreams—contrary. Frequently they appear so ; as, when Adele attempted to imagine the manner in which her father would receive the announcement of her flight, she calculated upon anger, curses, and immediate pursuit, the picture repelled her !

But could she have witnessed the blow she gave him, and the result, she would have softened and relented.

Nettie, the colored housekeeper, brought him a little paper that morning, and waited while he read it. He took it carelessly, put on his glasses and read :

"FATHER. I know you cannot forgive me, but I do not regret the step I am taking. Lawrence and I will be on our way to New York when this reaches you.

"ADELE."

No curses, no anger, no pursuit !

He sank into a chair and covered his face with his hands. He never knew how long he sat there, nor what brought him to his senses ; but old Nettie never forgot his white face nor the hopeless sorrow in his eyes as he said :

"She is dead to us, Netty. Never mention her name to me."

And that was all ! All ? Was it not enough that in one wee hour he lived all his life over again ; looked into the dead face of his broken-hearted wife, and read reproach there that would forever thrust cruel shafts at his broken peace ? Was it not enough to recall the life history of his child, and recognize on every page his indifference and his churlishness ? Could anger and curses cause the pungent pain that remorse inflicted ? Adele's marriage was a magnifying lens held up between his vision and the past ; he looked through it, and saw a life-failure. Then he knew what it was to regret.

At Wicksburr affairs went on the same. Mrs. Warwick learned of Lawrence's marriage with distinctive calmness. She had anticipated such an event ; but, nevertheless, it came with a hard ring upon her heart, and she always liked to remember that, on the previous evening, he had come back twice to kiss her, and call her his patient little mother. Boys frequently, with their rapid advancement of self-importance, grow ashamed of these tender little offices ; but if they could for once look *from mother's eyes*, and see themselves as mother sees them now, their self-esteem might receive a most flattering unction.

It really seemed very lonely now, without Charlie or Lawrence ; just the old people there alone, to spend their evenings in their quiet fashion. They were trying to feel contented, however, knowing that Lawrence was happy with his bride, and Charlie was visiting places he had always longed to see.

An event transpired in Philip's household which, for the time, drew forth the better part of his nature, and made him more of a man. It was the birth of a son, and was certainly an epoch in his prosy life of which

he always liked to think. A little brown-eyed baby, that stuck its chubby fists into its mouth and blinked comically at him. He was very proud and very fond of his baby, and in due time bestowed upon him the short, sweet name of Dayne.

Mary was an unassuming, trusting little woman, and was still infatuated with her husband. To her he appeared the embodiment of cleverness and originality. His family admired her, and were given to self-conclusions that she was intellectually superior to her husband, therefore little Dayne was quite a monarch in the two households, as well as in Aunt Prue's antique domicile.

CHAPTER VI.

A TRYING POSITION.

A sorrowful woman said to me :

“Come in and look on our child.”

I saw an angel at shut of day,

And it never spoke—but smiled.

I think of it in the city’s streets,

I dream of it when I rest—

The violet eyes, the waxen hands,

And the one white rose on the breast.

—*Thomas Baily Aldrich.*

LAWRENCE and Adele had been abroad a year, and, as the former desired to enter upon his professional career, they agreed to return, and, with M. D. affixed to his name, he hoped to add to his income as well as the health of the community.

Woodside, a villa belonging to Hayne Homestead, was prepared for their reception, and a cosy little nest it was, too. The house which, for unique design and

picturesque exterior, could not be surpassed, was of gray stone.

The one floor rested on a foundation three feet high. There was a pretty porch around two sides of the house, and its pillars resembled living things, so wrapt and entwined were they in tangled ivy, honeysuckle, and roses. The other sides of the cottage were enigmatical arrangements of balconies, bow windows, and gables. White stone steps led up to the front door. The windows were draped in soft, creamy lace, that swayed prettily as the cool air sought to penetrate its meshes.

They began life here in the sweetest fashion, and, notwithstanding the refusal of forgiveness Adele had received from her father, they were intensely happy. They laughed often at the remembrance of their gloomy wedding-day, and felt that Lawrence had predicted correctly regarding the silver-lined clouds, and that their life should be one long bright summer. They were in the very zenith of this summer dream ; had learned by daily communion to prize each other above every earthly gift ; and yet, amidst their connubial joy, just when earth seemed meet to clasp hands with Heaven, sorrow came and laid her branding-iron upon each brow.

One evening Lawrence rode briskly homeward from his office in the village, a half mile away. At the end of the principal street stood a young girl, evidently watching for someone. As Lawrence drove past her, she threw up her hand in an imperative manner, as though demanding audience, at the same time timidly calling, "Doctor, please stop."

Checking the homeward-bound horse, he inquired : "Wish to see me, miss ? "

"Yes, sir," she replied ; "there is a sick lady at the tavern who wants a doctor, and they sent me for you."

"Is she very sick—seriously so?"

"Yes, awful, and kind o' crazy-like."

"Perhaps, then, I had best not go on home. Get up on the seat, and I will go back with you."

When she had clambered up beside him, he asked her to tell him how long the lady had been ill and what seemed to be the nature of her illness.

"Well, you see, sir, as how no one don't know nothin' about her. She was brought here this afternoon, from the train that was wrecked four miles north, and she just moans and cries, and takes on dretful-like, and she's got a baby."

"Oh ! how old ?"

"Not more 'n a year."

"Poor woman ; has she not mentioned any friends to whom we could send ?"

"No, sir ; oncet when she was to herself, pa asked her if she would like for us to send for somebody she knowed, and she said she didn't have no friends, nor nobody would care if she died."

"How unfortunate ! We must see what can be done."

When he drove up to the little hotel, and assisted his clumsy companion to alight, Philip, who had been sitting with his chair tilted back against a tree, came forward, and, in the most graceful manner, begged to be allowed to take care of the horse while Lawrence visited the sick woman.

"Will it be any trouble to you, Phil ?"

"Not in the least."

So Lawrence was shown into the dingy, smoky parlor

—a painful contrast to the cheery, inviting room at Woodside. He felt considerable impatience at being kept waiting so long. Perhaps the woman would need but a few fever drops, or a mild opiate, and in that case this waiting seemed all the more irksome, for he was so impatient to get home to Adele, and rest. The few minutes seemed hours to him, before the girl announced the lady's readiness to see him. He was struck speechless with astonishment when the door swung back on its whining hinges, and exposed to his view the old-fashioned bed with its strangely-beautiful occupant.

He had expected to see a poorly-clad, sallow-visaged woman with a puny, sickly child clinging to her skirts. He expected that, because she had said she was friendless.

Could it be possible that this young girl, perhaps not twenty years old, was friendless? With a face as beautiful as Adele's, and shining masses of auburn hair lying unconfined upon her pillow; with such eyes and teeth, *could* she have said there was no one who would care if she died? On the back of the bed sat a baby, with eyes and hair like its mother's, and it chattered, and scolded, and squeezed the little rubber doll which it held in its hand, blissfully oblivious of its strange surroundings.

The girl who ushered him in said gruffly :

“Here's the doctor,” and slammed the door to signify her unwillingness to wait upon the aristocracy.

The tinge of annoyance that swept over the stranger's face at the announcement vanished the moment her eyes rested upon Lawrence's face. He hastened to her side and spoke a few words of greeting to her, and asked her a few professional questions, all of which she

answered in a weak and tearful voice. When he had paused to consider whether or not he should tell her how seriously she was injured, she saved him the anxiety by saying :

“I am very glad you have come, doctor, but you can do nothing for me. My injuries are internal, and necessarily fatal. I should not mind my going, were it not for my baby. Look at her, doctor ; is it not cruel to leave her here, all alone ?”

“But, surely, my dear lady, you have some friend, who will——”

“Doctor, strange as it may seem, I forfeited the last friend my girlhood knew by running away with my handsome husband. Shall you care to hear? I have not spoken of it for so long that it will do me good. My father was always stern, and would not allow me to have the privileges that other girls have ; and when my husband came to a mountain resort where we were summering, we met accidentally, and fell desperately in love. He asked my father for me, and was repulsed ; so the very next night I ran away and married him. Papa did not follow us, but sent a message to us—we never knew how he found out where we were—telling us never to come in his sight, or he would kill us both. You don’t know what a dreadful passion his is. He is a Frenchman, and is so unforgiving.”

Her agitation prevented her from telling this readily. She stopped often to choke back the sobs that rose.

Lawrence listened spell-bound. The circumstances reminded him so forcibly of his own wooing and marriage that when she ceased speaking he was amazed to find how deathly white she had grown, and what a painful effort she made to talk.

"Madam, I am greatly interested in your story ; it is wonderfully pathetic and sweet, but you must not agitate yourself so."

"Let me talk ; it may shorten my life a few poor hours ; but if you knew my suffering you would not chide me for hastening the end."

Another rush of tears and sobs.

"But, my dear madam, you must think of your baby. You must save your strength for preparation for the future."

"Oh, poor little Florence ! I had forgotten her ; what shall I do ? Oh, tell me, what shall I do ! "

"Mamma !" lisped the baby lips, and one little dimpled hand stole to her mother's neck and rested there. The action seemed to frenzy the young mother.

"Doctor, what will become of her ? "

"You have not told me where your husband is, lady."

"I don't know. I will tell you that. He had never told me much about his family before we were married, and afterward we were so happy we did not talk of anything else but ourselves and our love. Our life was just like playing we were married, it was so full of joy and pretty sunlight. But, after Florence came, he began to talk more about his people, and seemed so anxious to have them see the baby and me. So one day I told him I would go with him to visit his people. You can imagine the horror I felt when he told me they were *country people*—actually *lived in the country*. He declared they were as good blood as my own family, and wanted to take *me* into the back-woods to spend my summer. I am sure you cannot blame me, doctor, can you, when I don't like ignorance, nor illiterate people either, and

it was so cruel in my husband to deceive me so. He was so handsome—O Chad!” she cried, “after all I was to blame——”

“Madam, I must beg you to be quiet; this is doing you the greatest possible harm.”

“Yes, I know; but I am going out of his life forever, now. Poor Chad! he was only too good for me, after all. I have—such a horror of—leaving my baby with *this* kind of people——” waving her waxen hand toward the bar-room, whence came the sound of clinking glasses, coarse rude jests and the nauseous odor peculiar to such places. “What will become of her?”

Lawrence was silent; he could not tell her.

“Doctor,” she implored, “do you think you could find my baby a home, among—among people of *your* class, *not these*——” with a gesture of disgust. “Your face was, to me, like a light on a dark night, so different from the faces that have been about me to-day. Do you think, doctor, that you could find a home for Florence?”

How could he refuse a dying woman such a prayer—a home for her baby, so that she might die happier, knowing that her little helpless child would not be cast adrift upon the world! How could he refuse her?

“Yes; I think I could find her a home.”

“Among gentle folks?” she cried, eagerly.

“Yes, among gentle folks.”

“You have thought of a probable place for her? You are not trying to make my death easier, by telling me?”

“My dear madam, it is not such a difficult matter to find a home for such a beautiful child as yours, after we once know whose child she is. One must know that.”

"Yes — yes. Doctor, under — my pillow — get — it —"

She seemed suffocating ; he sprang to the door and called for assistance. In rushed the landlord, his wife, and two daughters.

"Is she wuss ?" asked the little fat landlord.

"Yes ; it will soon be over. Lady, will you kindly tell these good people what arrangements you wish made for your child ?"

She turned her large brown eyes upon Lawrence's face, and said, solemnly : "She is — yours to — do — as you think — best — the box —. O Florence — I am going — Florence — Chad, for — give me, Cha —"

The tender life had fluttered its last breath away. Weak and exhausted she called upon her loved ones, and died begging the forgiveness she had been too proud to ask.

Lawrence took the little plush jewel-casket from under her pillow and put it in his pocket. Then he reached out his arms to the little prattling Florence, and said gently :

"Come, Florence, will you not come to me, dear ?" but the pretty lips only said : "Mamma ! Mamma !"

"Mamma is asleep, dear. Florence must not wake mamma."

"Mamma sleep ?" whispered the baby-voice, and she settled back again, folding the dimpled hands in her lap, and signifying her intention of keeping quiet while mamma slept.

The good-hearted Irishwoman went around to the other side of the bed where baby sat, and began in her brogue :

"The blessed craythur ! Come along, darlint —" but

Florence drew away, and the woman, nothing daunted, took the child in her arms and attempted to soothe her by methods so foreign to anything that little Florence had ever experienced that the result was a lusty shriek, and the little arms were outstretched, and her body inclined entreatingly toward Lawrence. It touched his heart. He took the baby and held her in his arms while he told them that he would send someone to assist in preparing the body for interment, and ordered that nothing should be done until such assistance arrived.

The lady had carried a hand-bag, and it now hung upon a nail by the bed. Lawrence took it down and examined its contents. In a small purse was a roll of bills, and a railroad ticket from Memphis to Cincinnati. There was also a gold locket; on one side of it was a monogram set in pearls and rubies. There was a lock of black hair, and a little folded paper which he did not open, knowing that four pair of eyes were curiously and jealously regarding him. He counted the money, and said :

“This will go toward her expenses, and I will be responsible for her indebtedness to you.”

The women dressed the child in its pretty cloak and cap and set it up on the seat beside Lawrence. The child manifested not the least concern about leaving its mother, and during the preparation of its toilet, never once relinquished its hold upon Lawrence’s finger.

As he drove along the pretty country road in the gathering twilight, wondering what strange freak of destiny had sent him there this afternoon: wondering still more what he would do with the little child, now that he had taken it upon himself to provide it a home the

innocent cause of all his wonder amused itself by flapping the end of the lines, and saying, "Dep—hossy—dep!"

Lawrence drove through the little grove to his mother's. When he neared the gate he heard her—just inside the garden fence—singing softly to herself. Taking Florence in his arms, he called, gently: "Mother!"

She came toward him quickly, with surprise and pleasure in her countenance.

"Lawrence what do you want? Has anything happened?"

"Yes, mother, something has happened, but nothing to alarm you."

"What *have* you got there—a child?"

"Yes," he replied, stealthily. "Is there anyone here?"

"No; father is gone to the city. I am alone, but for Jane."

Jane was the housekeeper at Wicksburr.

"Here, give it to me. Where did you get it?"

"I will carry her to the porch, mother. Then you may have her. The little dear has gone to sleep."

He carried her to the veranda and put her in his mother's arms.

"Oh," she cried, wonderingly, "what a beautiful child! Do tell me, Lawrence, whose she is?"

"I don't know, mother," he began, slowly, while her eyes opened wider and wider. "Such a strange thing has happened, and I scarcely know how to tell it to you to make you believe me; it will seem incredulous to you. The people who witnessed the circumstances smiled so diabolically, and treated me with such suspicious imper-

tinence, that I should not wonder if the whole town is ringing with taunts about me."

"Tell me what happened. I can trust you."

"Yes, mother, I know you would trust me; but, to make you sure of my honorable intentions, I pledge you, mother, by every jot of honor, that I never saw that woman till to-day, and I do not now even know her name."

"One of your tender-hearted impulses," his mother said, fondly.

And he hastened to explain the whole circumstance, from the meeting of the landlord's daughter to the leaving of the hotel with the baby in his arms. She listened, deeply interested and as much affected, until he had concluded his narrative. Then she said, sadly :

"It is very strange, and very sad. And she did not even tell you her name?"

"No. But I am sure she would have done so had she not died so suddenly. You see, I knew when I saw her first, and talked to her, that no medicines were needed for that poor, unhappy child—for, mother, she was not more than a child. I should not imagine her to have been over nineteen, and, oh, how beautiful! I think what won me over, mother, was the story of her life, and its resemblance to Adele's. She was honest and true—I am sure of that mother. Her excitement hastened her death."

"And what are you going to do with the little stranger?"

"That is the question! I have always come to you for advice, but won't you let me advise you now?"

"Certainly, child; I will do whatever you think best."

"Then, dear, I would suggest that we let Jane take

care of this pretty stranger to-night, and you go down to the inn and superintend the preparations for the lady's burial, and I will come after you; or, for that matter, I can remain there, too."

"I will go." She carried the sleeping child into the house, and, instructing Jane to watch her tenderly, and give her nourishment if she wakened, she proceeded to don her garments for the ride to town.

One of Dayne's baby-gowns was brought out and put on the drowsy innocent, and Jane put her to bed, and sat with her book, close beside the bed, and read.

When they drove away from the house, Mrs. Warwick said :

"Lawrence, you have not told Adele yet, I presume?"

"Oh, no, of course not," he replied, earnestly.

"But you will tell her to-night?"

"Why, no, mother, I do not think I ought to tell her."

"And why not?" she asked, uneasily.

"Well, it would not be judicious. In the first place, Adele is given to worry and dread, and, if she knew of that child over there, she would not sleep one wink until she had visited the dead mother and the child as well."

"I do not think she ought to have the care of the child, but I *do* think she ought to know about it," continued the mother. He only replied :

"I don't think so."

"But, my son, she will learn of it, sooner or later, and I am sure it would be better for you to tell it than for her to hear it from some other source."

'No one is going to take the pains to tell it to her,

and as soon as I find out the contents of this little box I will find baby a home, and tell Adele all about it."

"Secrecy sometimes ends so disastrously that I am sure you had best speak about it, so that Adele may know your motive was merely human kindness."

"My dear mother, to hear you talk one would imagine that your life had been wrecked by a secret, whereas I think no woman ever lived more happily than you have lived in both instances."

"My marriages have both proven pleasant, and I may safely say that neither of my husbands ever left the house, or entered it, in an ill-humor toward me; but I think our placid life is due to the candor and truthfulness we have always practised; and, remember Lawrence, if you set an example of secrecy, you must give her the privilege of following it."

The idea of Adele having a secret from him was so novel that he actually smiled, notwithstanding his mother's seriousness. He could only think that his mother was over-anxious about their marriage felicity, and soothed his qualms of conscience by reflecting that it was only for Adele's comfort and happiness that he kept this knowledge from her, and knowing that his mother's life had been one of candor and truthfulness, and that she had an extreme horror of anything bordering on deception, he argued with himself that she was needlessly anxious. No one is better qualified to judge one true woman than another true woman, but Mrs. Warwick had ideas of her own regarding interference between young married people, and disliked to incur the stigma of managing mother-in-law. So she refrained from saying anything more to Lawrence; but when they stopped at the pretty little Woodside Cottage, and he had

gone in and made, as he thought, sufficient explanation, she called Adele, and, in the kindest manner, bade her go to bed and rest, as their errand, being one of mercy, might detain them long.

Adele did go to bed ; but not to sleep. She was not willing to acknowledge, even to herself, that she had any curiosity as to the purport of her husband's errand. Yet his actions were unusually reserved. He was in a hurry, to be sure, but he forgot that he had not come home at the usual hour for dinner, and that circumstance alone was a disappointment to her, who had *only him* to make her happy. Usually he came home and greeted her cheerily, and if there were no particular news to relate, chatted gaily upon personal topics, because it was his nature to be cheery and talkative. Besides, to a woman who remains so closely confined at home as Adele did, the poorest news is sometimes refreshing. She spent the night alternately at the door and window, listening for the sound of old Dolly's feet, and watching for her husband's cart through the bright moonlight.

It was morning when he came, and, as eager as she was to learn the circumstances, she refrained from any inquiry, lest Lawrence should imagine her curiosity premature and feel displeased. So, with a patience that might have done credit to Griselda, she administered to his wants, and lovingly performed the little offices for his comfort which most young wives leave for the servant's execution.

Lawrence was in a trying position. He had given his promise to a dying woman to provide for her child ; yet, even at this early hour, he realized the enormity of the undertaking. He was reclining upon a garden-seat, lazily puffing a cigar. Adele was occupied indoors.

His mind had travelled over and around the events of yesterday often, yet until now he had not thought of the locket. He drew from his pocket the purse and opened it. Taking up the ring of hair, he looked upon it and sighed. Whose head had it been taken from? It was beautiful jet-black hair, and as he held it, it curled around his finger and seemed alive. He laid it back gently and took up the locket. The monogram was "C.H." in pearls and rubies. He dreaded to open it. Yet who could tell?—this locket might tell the story of Florence's birth. It seemed an invasion of sacred ground, but he touched the spring and the lid flew back to reveal only one picture—the face of the child-mother who lay dead at the inn. There had been something in the other side, for the gold band that held the glass in place was scarred and dented, and where the pretty chased lining of the locket should be there was only a scratched piece of paper, which looked as though it might have been put in to keep an undersized picture from moving about. He put it away, but not before Adele had seen it as she came from the door down the steps. He thrust it into the purse so hastily that he did not miss the little folded paper that fell from the purse to the ground. Adele saw the locket, and knew that he had been looking upon a face; but she came and sat beside him, and *trusted him*. Could Lawrence have realized the pain, the patient pain his silence inflicted upon his doting wife, he would have put his arm about her and told her the truth, just as he had told it to his mother; but he thought—ignorant soul!—that she would not notice anything amiss; he thought he was behaving most naturally, and it would be kindest to keep her in ignorance of it until he could inform her of the arrangements he had

made for the child, and thus relieve her of all care of its comfort.

Some husbands have never realized how proud their wives are of husbandly confidence. Women are often regarded as mere pleasure-seekers, and the husband too often promotes indifference on the part of the wife by failing to show her that he regards her as something more than his housekeeper. She may be incompetent to advise, or counsel, but if she has been a good wife he owes her that consideration, just to show her that he trusts her, even as he expects her to trust him.

The saddest mistake that Lawrence Hayne ever made was when he said : "Adele, I may be detained again to-night, but do not worry. I shall be home as early as possible," and went away without the customary kiss, and without telling her of the baby who sat upon his mother's knee and sobbed for "mamma."

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST SEED OF DISTRUST.

I shuddered and shut my eyes,
And still could see and feel aware
Some mystic presence waited there ;
And staring with a dazed surprise,
I saw a creature so divine
That never subtle thought of mine
May reproduce to inner sight
So fair a vision of delight.

—James Whitcomb Riley.

WHEN Lawrence mounted the cart that morning, he did not notice that Adele had followed him to the gate, and stood leaning with her elbow on the post. He

drove off without looking back, until he turned into the wooded road that led to his mother's home. Then an undefinable impulse prompted him to look back. Somehow the picture smote him, he did not know why, but her figure so dimly seen in the distance, her attitude and the intensity of her look suggested pathos, and made him sad. He touched his fingers to his lips and flung them out toward her, but she did not see it. She remained in the same picturesque attitude, but she had bent her eyes unconsciously upon the ground ; and that was the picture he carried in his heart for sixteen long, lonely years—the picture of a fair young wife, standing white-robed at a gate, her arms supporting her bust, while the sunlight fell lovingly upon her hair and the violets at her breast.

When he had long been out of sight she went back to the house, and, flinging herself into an easy-chair, leaned back and closed her eyes, and, woman-like, fell to dreaming of the time when he had wooed and won her ; when every word was a caress, when every look was admiration ! They had something else to talk of now besides love and caresses ; but it did not take long to be kind ; besides Lawrence's affection was not studied, it was spontaneous as his generosity, and why had he so suddenly thrown this cold pall over her heart ? He did not know it ; he was so engrossed with his new thoughts that he forgot to be kind to the girl, whose only fault was that she loved him too well.

Lawrence had no sooner quitted the garden-seat than Philip's cane was thrust through the hedge, and dexterously sent after the note which Lawrence had let fall, and dragged with difficulty to within easy reach of his hand. Screened by the thick foliage of the hedge

which formed a fence between the garden and Mill Creek, he had watched Lawrence examine the locket and the hair, and had almost shouted for joy when the little bit of paper fluttered to the ground; though he never dreamed that it would be his good fortune to see its contents.

He scarcely breathed until Adele left the seat and walked to the gate. He had at last possessed himself of the paper, which he found to be a telegram, and this is what he read :

"CLARA: Sent you money-order to-day. Will meet you Thursday. "LAWRENCE."

With mouth wide open, and eyes dilated, he read it again and again ; he took off his hat and mopped his brow and read it over ; his hands trembled, and his ears had hideous noises in them, and still he held that paper !

When he had found his voice, he exclaimed, in a whisper:

"Jupiter and Mars! *He that?* He is worse than I am." He folded the paper and threw it out upon the grass beside the rustic bench. After Adele had gone to the porch, he got up and sprang agilely over the hedge and sauntered toward the house. She did not hear him, until he stood beside her and said, "Adele!"

She opened her eyes and blushed scarlet. Her mind was so harrowed with disappointment, that it seemed to her, coming from that unhappy reverie, that he had divined her thoughts, and knew that she was sad. She reached out her hands to him and greeted him warmly —the man she had trusted next to her husband, the man she would trust to their bitter sorrow

"You are welcome, Philip," she said, "though I am hopelessly dull."

"So? Then I shall certainly have the honor of seeing you in a new rôle."

"Did Mary not accompany you in your walk this morning; she usually does, does she not?"

"Yes; she was with me this morning, but stopped in at mother's while I sauntered around this way, though I did not expect to come in, in my hunting-jacket."

"It is especially becoming to you, Philip. Besides, you need not make any excuses to *me*, you know."

"You are very kind. I must confess I cared more for keeping out of the way of your guest than yourself, Adele."

"My guest? Why Philip, I have no guest," she said, wonderingly.

"No guest?" he cried, looking proverbially *cut*. "Then who is it that has been riding around with Loll for a couple of days?"

"I'm sure I don't know. You know the town people as well as I do."

"It wasn't any one from town. She looked——"

"*Was it a lady?*" she asked, hastily. "But, I beg your pardon; what were you saying?"

"I was going to say she looked like Miss Ray that visited here a long time ago. Let me see, I forget whether you were at home then or not."

"No," Adele answered, quietly, "I was not at home."

"She and Loll are great friends," Philip said, as he thoughtlessly switched the leaves of the shivering ivy that clung to the trellis.

"When did you see them, Philip?"

"Well, I saw them last night——"

"Oh no, Phil, *that was his mother*," Adele said, with a mischievous laugh.

"No, no; I saw him *late* in the evening with his mother, but this other was just before dark. She had brown hair and eyes, and was rather *petite*."

Adele would not knowingly allow her visitor to see that he had caused her a pang of jealousy. She felt sure that his thoughtless words were well meant, and that it would pain him to know that unwittingly he had disturbed her peace of mind, so she put on her brightest smile, and said :

"I am sure I cannot conjecture who he has been driving out with; some one who has called upon him for aid, probably."

"Yes, yes; I dare say; one cannot keep pace with a physician's habits. I am so glad that Loll is getting on so well; he has a fine practice."

"Yes, he has indeed. We are very happy here, notwithstanding our portentous wedding day." But she sighed when she remembered that some other fair young girl had sat beside him in the cart—*her* cart—that Lawrence's father had given her on her birthday. She remembered, too, the locket! But that picture she shut out of her mind; it was enough to remember that her husband had gone away without a good-by, or a kiss, that she could think of and forget her sorrow for the locket and the *petite* unknown; but she could trust him implicitly, and, perhaps, some day when he chose to tell her the circumstances regarding these strange things, she would be glad that she had trusted him. Her simple faith was beautiful!

Philip having remained until noon, arose to go, saying :

" You have not taken one stitch in your embroidery, nor read one line of your 'Don Quixote,' you have sacrificed your time entertaining me," and he displayed his handsome teeth as he smiled upon her, just as he had smiled years ago when his sole ambition was to displace Lawrence in her affections.

" I don't look much like a victim of martyrdom do I?"

" You would never show what you feel if you believed it would make some one uncomfortable, Adele."

They looked down the walk and saw Dick Turner coming towards them, with an anxious look in his usually good-humored countenance.

" Why, there is Dick; I wonder if anything is wrong."

" Oh, no, doubtless he is coming to see me," replied Philip.

When Dick had come to the bottom of the steps he took off his hat to Adele, and said softly :

" Philip, may I speak to you alone? Excuse me, Mrs. Hayne, it is imperative."

Philip bade Adele a hasty good-morning, and walked away with Dick, and Adele went into the house.

When they were away from the house, Philip said crossly.

" Well, now, what?"

" Philip, such a terrible thing has happened. Lawrence has been 'most killed.'

" *Lawrence hurt? Where is he?*" Philip queried, breathlessly.

" At his mother's—"

"How did it happen ; tell me all about it ?" Philip said, eagerly.

"Why, you see that, instead of going direct to his office this morning, Lawrence went around to his mother's, and stopped about an hour. He got into the cart and started off just as Jones' horse came dashing down the road dragging the front wheels of the spring wagon. I don't know whether Loll's horse shied and upset the cart down the bank, or the other horse ran into the cart and upset it, but when Cronie and Mrs. Warwick got to Lawrence he was lying in the ditch with the cart on top of him, and Dolly lying with her hoof against his head. He was bleeding and unconscious, and is so still."

"He is still unconscious ?"

"Yes ; and Dr. Maltby says he is sure he is injured internally, but it is impossible to find out much. One leg is broken, and there is a deep gash on his head."

"Heavens ! this is terrible ! You didn't come over to tell Adele, did you ? It would shock her to death."

"That is why I called you away. I thought perhaps, you could advise me. His mother suggested that we tell her he had been suddenly called away and had not time to advise her ; they thought they might keep her in ig—"

Philip interrupted him, crossly ; "Oh, no, that won't do. *Dogs* couldn't drive him out of town without sending her some word, and she knows it." Dick made no reply, which gave Philip ample time for reflection ; the result was his face illumined, which changed his whole aspect. He hastened to add : "But, say, after all the suggestion is a good one. But how shall

we accomplish the object of your visit? Can you tell her, Dick, without wincing?"

"I don't know; I think I can. I never told a lie but once, and then I was caught in it before I had it half told, but this is such a different matter; it is for her sake. I guess I can tell it. Oh, Fate! the girl is at the window watching us with a face as white as death. She suspects something, sure. You had better tell it. Philip; she was always good to me; you may tell it, *I* would weaken sure."

Adele had been watching them from her window, and, as Dick had said, suspected some wrong. Her mind being disturbed any way, she imagined more readily that the colloquy concerned herself.

Not waiting to be summoned, she went down the steps and stood beside them. She laid her hand on Philip's arm, and said, seriously:

"I am sure, Phil, you are speaking of me. Something has happened! Tell it to me—quick."

"Well, Adele, don't agitate yourself; nothing has happened that need frighten you, but it will disappoint you."

"Tell me what it is," she rejoined, growing whiter still.

"You will think we are two villains to frighten you so. Dick has come with a message from Lawrence, to say he was suddenly called away, and would be gone two weeks."

"*Lawrence gone away? Where to?*"

"To Mobile," he replied coolly.

Miss Ray lived in Mobile.

"But why—did he not—"

“He only had time to catch the train. I dare say you will hear from him directly.”

“Yes, I am sure I shall hear from him immediately, but I am so sorry. I wish he had bade me good-by.”

The pallor had given place to a flush in her cheeks. She looked very beautiful, standing on the steps with the vines and roses all about her; her white dress swaying gently in the air, and in her hand a large red rose. Dick said, “Good-morning,” hastily, and promised to bring her any word as soon as it arrived; then made a hasty exit.

“Don’t fret about it, Adele; it was horribly careless in him not——”

“You have just said that he had only time to catch the train,” she retorted, in her husband’s defense.

“Well, so he had. We must be lenient with the poor fellow. I do not doubt he regretted to leave so suddenly. Well,—taking out his watch—“I must be going on. Mary has been at home an hour, I suspect.”

“Wait until I get my hat, I will walk through the garden with you. I feel that I should suffocate indoors.”

She soon came out with a pretty hat trimmed in mull and white roses. She looked so young and fair, walking at his side, drawing on her white silk gloves, that for a moment he wished he had not happened here this fatal morning and had spared himself that false position.

He was watching her out of the corner of his eye, when she suddenly exclaimed :

“Dear, dear! How shall I pass the hours till Lawrence comes back?”

“Mary and I will do all we can to help you to consume time.”

"Have you ever been away from Mary long?"

"Never over a day."

"Then you do not wonder that this separation disturbs me? It is our first."

"I wish it might be your last."

"Oh, how kind," she exclaimed, laughingly.

"What would you do, Adele, if Lawrence did not come back at all?"

She uttered a little horrified shriek, and cried:

"*Oh, Phil, don't* drag such hideous spectres before my imagination."

"Well, such things *have* happened, you know."

"Certainly; but could not happen to *me*. Why, I cannot, even for curiosity, imagine such a thing. It would be utterly impossible for me to *live* without Lawrence, though, of course I should have to drag out some kind of an existence, like other people do after their friends leave them." But the tone of her voice and the far-off look in her eyes told him how worse than death her life would be. They sat down upon the seat that Lawrence had occupied. Directly Adele's eyes caught the little fluttering paper on the ground at her feet, she picked it up, but, to Philip's disappointment, did not open it. Whether she was unconscious of having a paper in her hands, or felt an instinctive reticence about opening it in his presence, Philip could not determine: but certain it was she did not deign to notice it otherwise than to wrap it round and round her finger, then smooth it out, and fold it over and over again, until it looked like a little ball, and otherwise abuse it, until her companion despaired of the slight tracery being legible after having sustained this damaging process.

They chatted unceasingly, Philip making a broad pretense of an attempt at driving off her depression, and she, poor girl, assuming a levity she did not feel, in order that he might not see the pain she felt at the news he had told her, following so closely upon the stab the locket, the *petite* unknown, and her husband's unusual indifference had given her. Thus each was trying to impress the other falsely ; yet hers was prompted by a sweet womanly impulse of trying to soothe the ills of another, while the wound gnaws deeper and deeper in her own heart.

When Philip had risen again, to take his departure, she said :

“ Phil, do you think Lawrence’s errand could be connected with the visit he and his mother made last night ? ”

Philip *looked* the confusion he did not feel, and answered, hastily : “ Why, who told *you* about that visit ? ”

“ He stopped to tell me that he had to go out, but did not say where. I never evince any curiosity in his professional affairs, and all I know is what he voluntarily tells me. I presume this case was dangerous, and he thought it would annoy me. Of course, I shall hear all about it when he comes home ; but I just wonder if his business relates to that ? ”

“ Doubtless. Oh, I don’t know, either ; perhaps not at all. At any rate,” he began, cautiously, “ I would not seem curious about it. A husband, as a general thing, don’t admire curiosity in his wife ; and if he desires to tell you anything he will do it of his own free will, and if he don’t choose to tell you, you will save him the mortification of shirking the truth, and save

yourself some unhappiness, perhaps, by appearing to notice nothing."

He had planted the first seed of distrust but she did not know it, so *she thanked him, and was grateful* for his words. Then he bade her good-bye, and went away.

She indifferently spread open before her the telegram, and read :

" CLARA : Sent you money-order to-day. Will meet you Thursday. " *LAWRENCE.*"

CHAPTER VIII.

A RECONCILIATION.

What was love then ? Not calm, not secure—scarcely kind, But in one, all intensest emotions combined ; Life and death, pain and rapture, the infinite sense Of something immortal, unknown and immense ! Thus doubting her way, through the dark, the unknown, The immeasurable did she wander alone, With the hush of night's infinite silence outspread O'er the height of night's infinite heaven overhead.

—Owen Meredith.

PHILIP went direct to Wicksburr from Woodside, a distance of two miles through the woods. Arriving there, he went immediately to the cool, airy chamber where Lawrence lay, and learned that Dick's report was true in all its hideousness. Lawrence might have been dead for any sign of life he gave ; so still and white, with the bands of lint about his head, and his shapely hands lying motionless on the coverlet.

" Doctor, do you think he is in much danger ? "

"Mr. Warwich," spoke the doctor, cautiously, "I apprehend the worst possible result if this unconscious state continues much longer ; but I have not thought it best to admit my fears to the family yet."

"Then he cannot possibly be taken home soon ?"

"I cannot allow him to be disturbed for a fortnight, at least. His wife will have to come here ; I cannot let him go to her."

"Oh, but we don't want Adele to know it. She thinks he is away, and we are trying to keep her in ignorance of it."

"Very good," said the doctor, rising. "I am going out to mix this for an application. You will be kind enough to call me if he stirs ever so slightly."

When the doctor left the room, Philip sat regarding his step-brother, half-sadly and half-maliciously. It seemed a pity to see such a handsome, sturdy *physique* maimed and helpless. Yet he could not feel the sympathy for him that he ought to have felt. He looked about him, at the soft cool draperies, the neat, tidy appointments, and remembered that this was the room his father had had remodeled and refitted for Lawrence's mother years before. How angry he was then ! And somehow, as he sat and mused over that unhappy time of long ago, he got angry again and raved inwardly, and chafed at the thought that, had it not been for this boy's mother, he would have had undisputed right to anticipate the whole of the Wicksburr estate, and even now he dreaded to contemplate his punishment if his father ever learned of the trick he had played Lawrence on that dark wedding morn.

He looked about him, and on a chair near the bed hung Lawrence's vest, bespattered with mud and blood,

and on another chair hung his coat. Without further thought of the deception he was practising, in this poor, helpless presence, he seized the vest and ransacked the pockets. There was the little purse found in the dead woman's shopping bag. Then he explored the pockets of the coat, and, to his amazement and delight, he found the little plush box that Lawrence had taken from under the dead woman's pillow. Philip was not aware of any such box having been in Lawrence's possession, but it did not take him long to conclude that it had belonged to the unknown woman, and it might, after all, be of service to him. Lawrence had not examined the contents of the box. He had had no opportunity to do so before his misfortune, and it was many long years after that he was allowed to know the contents of the little casket which had been given into his keeping.

The physician returned, and found Philip just where he had left him, and did not fail to observe and appreciate the sadness and regret which the former essayed to depict upon his countenance.

Philip could do nothing, so he went into his mother's room, and begged her to command him if he could be of any service. She was grieved over her boy's misfortune, and it was soothing to speak about him. Yet Philip was eager to get away. The papers in that little box were burning his pocket. He must get away and examine them, and know the secret that Lawrence longed to know.

Ah, he was happy now ! He walked out of the house and passed down the road, dreaming day-dreams of victory.

He went to his own home, and, meeting Cronie in

the garden, ordered his carriage brought around immediately, then went indoors, and acquainted his wife with the accident, and explained to her that Adele must not know of it. He asked her to get ready immediately and go with him over to Adele. "We must be her companions, Mary," he said, "because mother cannot come, and some one must be with her always, to prevent anyone from telling it."

"Phil," she answered, gently, "I do not think this deception is right. It is certainly unjust to Adele, and cannot do any one any advantage."

"Why, no, dear, it is not unjust. As soon as Lawrence is out of proximate danger we will tell her; then she can go to him."

"Ah, Phil, think how she will feel when she does find it out, knowing that all this time he is ill and suffering, she is sitting cool and comfortable at home waiting for a letter. Indeed, Phil, I hate to be a party to the deception, for if I were in her place I could never forgive them for keeping me away from you."

She leaned over and kissed his face. Perhaps the act smote his conscience, for he said, rather unwillingly: "Well, now, dear, don't worry over other people's troubles. Perhaps it would be better, after all, to tell her; so, if we find a good opportunity, we will soften it down and tell her." Mary was delighted, and ran away to dress, saying to herself: "Mary, my girl, *we will make* an opportunity to tell her. She shall have the satisfaction of at least sitting by her boy, and that is better than the abominable trick of deceiving her. They must think the girl is wax; that she will melt at the first hot breath."

Thus she mused, anxious and eager to help the girl

who had always been so kind to her. And while Philip teases and banterers the mischievous Dayne, Mary concocts plans to inform Adele that she must change her residence.

They drove up to the gate at the side of the yard. Supposing, of course, they would find Adele on the veranda, as she was not to be seen in the garden, they hastened around to that side of the house ; but she was not there. They went into the hall, and met Julia, who was the daughter of the old negro, Nettie, who had been in Frederic Moore's service for twenty years. Julia had been a nurse-girl for a wealthy family in the neighborhood at the time of Adele's marriage. When the latter returned from Italy, Julia expressed her anxiety to serve Adele in the capacity of housekeeper, and was immediately installed.

"Julia, where is your mistress ?" asked Mary, pleasantly.

"O Missus Warruck, missus am done got sick." And Julia rolled her eyes around in her solemnity, and looked unhappy.

"Is Adele sick ? Why, Julia, what caused it ? She is not so very sick, is she ?"

"Pow'rful. Gittin wuss an' wuss. Don't know nuffin."

"Don't know anything ? Why, good gracious, Julia, who is here beside you ?" Mary said, affrightedly.

"Now, Missus Warruck, dis chile knows dat you won' go telling uv it. Ole Massa Moore ud done break marm's hed ef he knowed dat she ben heah dis time, shuh."

"Is Nettie here ? That is well. But take me to Adele's room right away. Phil, you may keep Dayne

here. I shall try to do something for Adele, poor girl."

Julia led the way into the chamber, in the south wing. There lay Adele, white and still as death. Her breathing was scarcely perceptible. Her lips were only a bluish line across her face. Nettie was bending over her, moistening her lips, and trying to force between them a few drops of the decoction which she dipped with a medicine spoon from a glass in her hand, murmuring all the time : "My poah chile ; dey don' kitch dis hyar chile leaben you to die, shuh nuff, all 'lone. Ole Mars Moore ain't gwine ter git dis ole brack hed outen dis hyar doah 'thout you, honey."

"Nettie," said Mary, "have you sent for a physician ? We must have some help—oh, Adele, you sweet girl, what is it—oh, horror, isn't she white ? Nettie, we must have someone, quick," Mary said, in broken sentences and long breaths.

They sent for Philip, and found him holding audience with Julia. The latter went out of the room when Nettie entered, and said that "Missus Warruck dreffel scairt, and sez fer 'im to go fer de doctor."

He took up his hat and bounded down the steps, and entered his carriage, at the same time ordering his man to drive to Dr. Pearson, fast as possible. They soon returned with the physician, and everything that could be done was done ineffectually. She did not change, save once ; she turned her head and moaned, and murmured "papa."

Dr. Pearson shook his head, and looked discouraged. "This is queer business," he said. "Something must be done, and that quickly. Let me make a suggestion. Someone go for Mr. Moore. I believe his presence

would create a change, at least. This is only a stupor, and perhaps his voice, as she has not heard it for so long, may have a good effect."

"But, doctor, he would not come. Of that I am sure," Mary said, doubtfully.

"I don't know about that. He is an eccentric old fellow, but I rather think he will come. Someone go. Great Heaven! we must try everything, whether it is agreeable or not," he said, impatiently.

"I will go, if Julia will go with me. It would be no use for me to go alone, for he would shut the door in my face; but, after Julia excites his curiosity, I think we may safely count upon a hearing," Philip suggested, and they all agreed.

He and Julia passed out of the house into the yard, when Philip said: "Julia, where did your mistress become ill?"

"In de garden, Massa Warruck."

"Do you know what produced her illness? It was not the heat, was it?"

"Lawd no. Ef heat ud kill dat chile, she ud ben dead long nuff ago, shuh."

"Did she have a fright, or read anything that might have produced unconsciousness?"

"Massa Warruck, dis chile knows dat you's huh frien', an' I'se gwine ter tell you jest how I foun' 'er. When dinna wuz 'bout cooked to a cinda, waiting on Mars Hayne, I went outen de gardun fer her, and dar, on dat bench, I seed Miss Hayne a-settin, an' I jest went up to her, an' sez, 'Miss Hayne,' an' she neber budged; an' I sez, 'dinna am spilt,' an' she jest neber budged agin, so I tooked her han' an' raised it up, an' it jest fell like a stun; an' I frowed watah, an' klone, an'

eberyting, but dis chile could no' help her, an' I runned arter marm, an den you uns cummed."

"But, Julia, did you not find a paper, or anything, that could have caused her fainting-spell? *Something* must have caused it."

"Yaas, Massa Warruck. I foun' dis," and Julia went down among the folds of her brown calico dress, and fumbled with both hands until she had possessed herself of the little paper, which she had hastily thrust into her pocket.

She handed it to Philip, who took it and exclaimed, "And this did it! Where did you find this, Julia?"

"Squashed up like dat," she said, crushing a maple leaf in the black hand to illustrate it.

"Well, Julia, do you think you could keep a secret?"

"Lawd, yaas; say I cud."

"Well, then, you go to Mr. Moore and take a box that I shall give you, and tell him that the contents of that box were found in Lawrence's pockets, and tell him how that note was found crushed in Adele's hand. If you will do this, Julia, and do it right, I will pay you well for it."

"Pay me money?"

"Yes, money, lots of it."

"Shuh nuff money, no foolin' now?"

"Certainly, sure enough money. But, Julia, money wouldn't save your neck, if you ever tell it."

"Tell what?"

"Why, that I hired you to do it."

"You'll pay me lots o' shuh nuff munny."

"Yes, lots of it."

"Gib me de box. I keep dat sekrut fer munny," and she stretched out her black hand for the box.

"Wait till we get out of sight of the house. I want to look over some things, first."

When they reached the end of the lane, they paused, and he examined the fastening of the little casket. Touching a spring, the lid flew back and revealed a lot of papers, some letters and a picture. He opened the paper nearest the top ; running his eyes over it, he uttered an ejaculation of astonishment, and let the box with all its treasures fall to the ground.

"Good Lawd, Massa Warruck ; is anything in dar 'live ?"

"No ; but Heavens, Julia, I have discovered something, oh, oh !" Julia regarded him in an amazed stare, while he stooped and gathered up the papers, which threatened to blow away with every gust of air. When he came to the picture, he sat down upon the ground and indulged in a series of incoherent mutterings that Julia could not understand. "Well, Julia, I'll just send this picture and this paper and locket ; that will suffice."

He tied them together, wrapped a paper around them, and handed them to Julia, saying :

"Now, Julia, tell him that his daughter is dangerously ill, and the doctor thinks *he* can bring her to consciousness ; tell him she is in deep trouble ; and for him to come without fail."

Julia marched off toward the Moore residence, and, reaching the house, rang the bell violently. There being no one there but the old gentleman he was obliged to answer the summons himself. No sooner had he recognized Julia than he tried to shut the door, but she, with the quickness of a cat, sprang in the doorway, and stood like a postilion, against the jamb.

"What do you want here?" Frederic Moore thundered in her ears.

"It's you I want, Massa Moah. Miss Adele, she 'bout to die, and de doctah sez dat you kin 'stoah huh to life ef you jest come 'long, hurry." He hesitated before answering :

"What is the matter with your mistress?"

"I foun' huh on de gardun bench, en'sens'bul, an' dis hyar papah waz a-gwabbed jest like dat, in huh hand."

He paid no attention to the paper.

"Where is her husband?"

"He dun gone off."

"Gone off? Where to?" The old man cried, betraying his interest, which he tried hard to hide.

"Dunno, I jest heerd 'em say as he'd gone off."

"Well, go back and attend to your mistress; you can get on without me," and motioned her out of the door. A card-receiver stood near the door; she leaned forward and laid the parcel there. She went back to where she had left Philip; he was waiting for her, smoking a cigarette.

"What success?" he asked.

"No s'cess a-tall, he jest mawched me outen de doah."

"What did you do with the parcel?"

"Laid it on the table an' lit out."

Philip muttered, and started up. Re-entering the house, he informed them of their fruitless errand, and was informed in return that Adele had regained her reason, and was in a fair way to recover, if they could only prevent excitement. The doctor had gone away with minutest directions regarding the medicines he had left.

Towards evening, Philip and Mary returned home ; they could do nothing, as the doctor had recommended absolute quiet. Nettie refused to go. Adele begged of her to return, knowing how angry her father would be at this breach of obedience, but Nettie was obdurate, and would not go.

In the evening they propped Adele up on a pile of pillows, and drew her bed around to the window, where the scented air from off the dew-laden flowers fanned her cheeks and cooled her brow.

She might have sat thus a half-hour, when footsteps arrested her attention, and when she turned, she beheld —her father !

“*Father !*” she exclaimed, with ill-concealed fear.

“Adele,” he began, falteringly, “do you know why I have come ?”

“I—I am glad that you have come ; but I—I—don’t know——”

“No ; you do not know what brings me here. I have come, my child, to tell you that I see my own wrongs toward you ; it cost me an effort, Della, to come ; you know that ?”

“Yes, I know it, papa —” but she could go no farther ; her voice faltered, and then she dropped her head in her hands and sobbed. This gave her father opportunity and courage. With a volubility that no one had ever before known him to display, he explained his reason for coming. He had said it cost him an effort to come ; but words could not describe the fight he had had with his pride, before impulse got the mastery. He had examined the papers, and, amid curses, threats, and heart-broken ejaculations, he had resolved

to do justice to the dead wife, and grant forgiveness to the living daughter.

"Don't cry, Della ; you are unhappy to-night, my child ; I know what has happened, and I will spare you all needless pain ; but Adele, I have come to take you away——"

"*From Lawrence?*"

"Yes, from Lawrence ; would you stay with a——"

"*Don't*, you are angry ; don't speak ill of him. We don't *know* that he has done a wrong, we only have that little paper ; it may be false or it may be a mistake ; we cannot judge him by *that*, papa." When she finished speaking, after the most noble effort at calmness, she was panting breathlessly, and lines of pain were about her mouth. She might have been overcome by an act of her husband's, but it did not signify that she would calmly listen to any comments from someone else, even though that someone be her old, broken-down father.

"I would wait, Adele, and see Lawrence," he winced and tightened his lips as he uttered the name, "had I no other proof of his guilt than that paper ; but I have two other proofs, Adele, and if you were able to bear a shock, I would show them to you ; but we will wait until you are better ; then I will prove to you that I am right ; besides, I want to make a visit before I do anything rash. Will you promise me, Della, that if these accusations are true you will come back to me ?"

"Papa," she said, sadly, taking his hand, "it is loyal and true in you to forgive my marriage, that was so hateful to you ; I appreciate your goodness in coming to me now, when I am in trouble, but, papa, you do not realize what a gigantic thing you are asking

me to do ; what a sacrifice you are asking me to make ; tearing a wife from her husband is a fearful thing, papa ; a *fearful* thing ! I am sure that if Lawrence is guilty of this deceit, he will abandon it, when he knows how sincerely I deplore it ; he will give it up when he knows how nearly I have died from it."

" Give it up, Adele ? You know so little about men and their ways. Instead of giving it up, he would be spurred on by your sorrow ; he might not wish to grieve you, but the very thought that he was doing you an injury would make it seem impossible for him to further his wishes, and the denial would make them more tempting ; besides, Adele, it has come to such a pass that I am afraid he dare not break off with—"

" I don't understand you, papa."

" No, you do not understand me, because you know of nothing but this little paper. I know of something else."

She would not ask him what it meant, but she would have given much to know.

" Daughter, I will make one more proposition. I have a suspicion of something having occurred in town last night, and I am going down to the inn to learn what it was. I heard a bystander speak sneeringly of Hayne's fair protégée ; I will go and see what it meant ; if I find that this is a mistake, and that your husband is not dishonorably implicated, I will come to you and tell you so, and, in reparation for this suspicion, and my readiness to believe these papers, I will offer my friendship and good-will to your husband, and shall do all in my power to promote your prosperity."

" Oh, papa, you will forgive Lawrence ?" she cried, eagerly.

“Only on the condition I have named. On the other hand, if I am still convinced of his fraud, I will take you away with me—you start, Adele, I know I pain you, but it is best my child ; it is best.”

“Papa, I would rather bare my breast, and feel the knife thrust into my heart, than to live here in this atmosphere, and hear his name ; perhaps *see his face* and know that he is a stranger to me. Why, papa, you cannot understand.”

“No, I cannot clearly understand, but I am sure, Adele, that I know best. I am going to take you away. For years, I have wanted to paint a picture that will live after I am dead. I want to take a tour through Switzerland mountains, and afterward settle down abroad, for awhile, at least. If I do this, Adele, I must do it now ; I am too old to put it off long. If you would rather stay here than go with me, why——”

“Papa, I”—she could only lean her head and moan. She had said to herself that she would be true to Lawrence ; if he had sinned, she would try to win him back by her forgiveness. But when her father said that he was old, and she looked at the gray hairs so profusely scattered on his head, and the deep lines on his face, it seemed to her that Heaven had been unjust, and that she had better have been slain by one of those terrible gleams of lightning, on her fatal wedding-day, than to have lived to be tortured thus. Poor girl ; there are duties and duties ; but the hardest duty to perform is the one for sympathy’s sake.

“Do not answer me now ; I will come back to-night, and you shall give me an answer then. Good-bye, Della. *I will be kind.*”

When he had closed the door, she buried her face in

her handkerchief and sobbed brokenly, "He must have suffered! He is patient and kind. Ah, papa, why did you not treat me kindly then? I can do so much for friends that love me."

As her father passed out through the hall, he said to Nettie, "*Admit no one to-night*; until I return." He then went out through the garden and passed only a few feet away from Adele's window. His head was bent upon his breast and he walked as though in serious meditation. Adele watched him as long as he could be seen in the dim moonlight, and when he had emerged from view, she lay back upon her pillow and decided, not without regret and pain, that inasmuch as she had disobeyed and sacrificed her father for Lawrence's sake, if the latter had wantonly deceived and wronged her, she would go with her father, and in hapless misery weighed her husband in the balance, and awaited her father's return, to hear his report.

"And I had learned to think that earth held only happiness for me. O my love, I could place my hand on your dead face, and be calm; but this is worse than death!"

CHAPTER IX.

A DISAPPOINTMENT.

I know that it was my own hand that shut it
And locked it—but I threw away the key ;
And so the door can never more be opened
That stands so grimly betwixt you and me.

—Howard Glyndon.

FREDERIC MOORE was more sincere in his intent to do good than his non-admirers may imagine. It must have required a mammoth effort to forgive a disobedience that had been like gall and wormwood to him. His whole life had become a disappointment, and all there was in it, that had seemed beautiful, had been soured by chagrin and regret. Yet, after all that, the best part of his nature arose at the knowledge of his daughter's wrongs, and he came forward to either avenge them or make amends if he had been mistaken. It must be admitted that this was meritorious, and Adele, always glad to recognize the good before the bad, saw it, and honored him.

He went to the little rude, weather-stained house, that was used for hostelry, saloon, and all public gatherings, and, going into the bar-room, asked to see the landlord.

The proprietor, a brisk little Irishman, came out of the parlor, and the moment his eyes rested on Frederic Moore, the aristocratic artist, who had hitherto scorned to notice even the sign above the door, his manner changed from pompousness to obeisance.

"An' shure, what can Oi do for Misthur Moore?"

"May I speak to you privately, McCarthy?"

"An' shure, sir, ye can. Coom this way, Misthur Moore."

He conducted the artist through the hall into the little smoky parlor, and seated him in the very chair that Lawrence had occupied the day before when he impatiently awaited summons to the sick chamber, so restless was he to return to Adele; but Mr. Moore did not know that, and, in an almost inaudible whisper, said:

"Mr. McCarthy, what happened here yesterday?"

"A woman died, shure." The old man blinked an accompaniment.

"What kind of a woman? Young, old, handsome, ugly, rich, poor, or what kind?"

"Och, Misthur Moore," putting his hand to his lips, "she was young and bootiful, an' it's mesil as thinks rache, too."

"She was young and beautiful? What did she leave here—anything?"

"Nothin' here. He took it all away."

"Who?"

"Your son-in-law, yer honor."

"What did he take?"

"The blissid babby an'—"

"He took the baby away, did he?"

"Yaas; an' the box under her pillow, an' her bag."

Frederic Moore drew from his pocket the picture he had received at Julia's hands. Placing his hand over the name written on the bottom of the picture, he said, stiffly:

"Is that the baby?"

The Irishman's face lighted up joyfully.

"An' shure, Misthur Moore, that is the darlint hersil—
the little Florence."

The artist replaced it in his pocket, and sighed.

"Did you hear anything said between them?"

"Not much, shure. He was in there about an hour, an' all tur onct he opened the door an' called us in ; an' she was doying thin' an' said that that was his choild. That's all Oi heard, Mr. Moore, that's all Oi heard."

"She said that was his child!"

"Yaas ; an' he cud do whatever he thought best, shure."

"You would swear to this, Mr. McCarthy?"

"Shure an' Oi would."

"Who else heard it?"

"My woife an' daughters, sir."

"That will do. You will understand that this is in confidence, and that you are not to speak of it."

"Oi understand."

Bent upon the one object, Frederic Moore retraced his steps to Woodside. To describe his emotions would seem a waste of patience and time, for only those who have suffered from a loved one's sorrow can realize the terrible wrath and pain that this father experienced. It was such a hard fight, too, for his naturally vindictive nature was hard to control, and for Adele's sake he hoped to do what was necessary with as much outward pleasantness as possible.

He went back to the house, and went softly to the cool, dimly-lighted chamber. Adele had fallen into a semi-stupor, and, with closed eyes and pale cheeks, made a beautiful but touching picture for her father's eyes.

When he came into the chamber the scene struck him so differently from anything he had anticipated that his regret and remorse seemed to roll over and over in his heart until the burden became too heavy to be borne patiently. He forgot that Lawrence had wronged her. He remembered only that *he* had been a cruel, relentless father, and that his tyranny had driven his child from home. He fell at her feet and cried, and begged her to forgive him ; that he had been cruel and unrelenting, and had calumniated an innocent man, but if she would only forgive him he would be kind.

She opened her eyes and listened. His words and his manner had but one interpretation to her, that he had found Lawrence guiltless, and had come back to ask her pardon and her love. She laid her hand on his head, and said, gently, with a master effort to conceal the eager anticipation that almost consumed her :

“Papa, he is innocent. I know it from your words.”

The remark was like electricity. He sprang up, and thoughtlessly cried :

“Innocent ! No ; he is worse than I thought. Adele, you are disgraced, *disgraced*, Della ; though you have done nothing worse than to love a man who has disgraced and dishonored your name !”

She did not answer. It must have been because the white lips were so stiffened with misery they would not move.

“Shall I tell you the worst, Adele ?”

“Not yet ; no, not yet.”

Then he touched her hands with his lips, and went away.

She did not moan nor cry out. She neither wrung her hands nor paced the floor. She sat dumb and

dazed, staring through the window at the shadows of the trees as they lay quivering on the ground. The leaves and branches seemed quaking with pain ; suspended between heaven and earth, they seemed sobbing and bowing their heads in unutterable woe. Adele fell to dreaming of the similarity of her life and the picture she had drawn of the tree. The latter stood proud and regal among its sisters once. Its arms outstretched to gladden the earth with its cooling shade ; a human creature comes along, and, with soft white hands, tears from its body one of its tender branches, and ruthlessly throws it away, if he does not still further torture it by dissecting the tendril into atoms. The wounded tree writhes in pain, but no one hears, save the wind that comes to soothe and lull its pain with its soft caress and musical voice. Thus had Adele's life been maimed. Once she was a girl, young and happy, and her heart was tender and charitable.

The creature passed her way, and, plucking her heart from her breast, carelessly threw it away and here she sat, nursing her woe, and wondering why heaven had sent her this sorrow, when through all her life she had sought to do good.

We never know. It is woman's fate to sacrifice and suffer, to atone for her disobedience in the Garden of Eden.

Mr. Moore did not return to Adele's room that night. He sent Julia in to put her mistress to bed, saying that he would come over early in the morning.

Adele did not demur when told that she ought to lie down. She did not sleep for a long time after Julia had signified her slumbering state by her hard breathing. Adele lay and listened to the guttural sounds for

a time, and thought of the pain and shame in store for her, but, owing to her loss of sleep the night previous, she fell into a troubled slumber, and moaned and talked, evidently to Lawrence, all the night. When morning came Frederic Moore was admitted to the parlor, and was amazed at learning that Adele was up and walking about. He went out into the garden, and found her sitting, pale and sad, on the bench where only yesterday Julia had found her insensible.

She did not get up, but reached her hands to him eagerly. He sat down beside her, and asked her if she slept. She replied affirmatively, and added :

“Papa, I have thought it all over, and think that I am as well prepared to hear the worst now as any time, and you may tell it to me——”

“I think, Della, we had better postpone it until some other time. You are really not strong enough yet.”

“Oh, yes, I am. I cannot endure the suspense. The truth cannot hurt me much more.”

“I am sorry, Adele, to tell it, because it will pain you so ; but you have read the note—the telegram ?” She inclined her head. “And this,” producing the picture, “was found in his possession, and this.”

She paid no heed to the last paper he handed her. She was holding the picture ; that innocent face that smiled up into her eyes. She examined every lineament, and the only thing she could see was Lawrence’s eyes. Poor Adele ! She suffered more and more every moment, and still she held the picture. At length her eyes left the childish face and strayed down over the chubby hands, the lace dress, and down to the margin where a name was written, a name that made her giddy and faint, but she betrayed no stronger feeling than she

had at the sight of Lawrence's eyes set in the baby face. She took the paper up and read : " Florence Holbrook, born May 20th, 18—"

Out of respect for her Frederic Moore had walked to the hedge, and stood looking over the stream of water that gurgled and splashed against the pebbly bank. He had not stood there long until he saw Philip Warwick step out of a boat at the end of the garden and fasten it to a tree. Then he sauntered, in his graceful, leisurely fashion toward the garden gate. Mr. Moore knew that Philip would see Adele before he should espy the former, so he stood quite still, saying, under his breath : " Yes, that snake comes creeping around the nest." He saw Philip bend over his daughter's hand. He heard her say : " I am glad to see you." And presently she said, looking about her : " Why, where has papa gone ? "

" Your father here ! " Philip cried.

" Yes, papa has been with me. I do not see how I could have gotten through the terrible night without some friend. Philip, I have decided to go home with papa."

" What for ; are you so lonely here ? "

" Yes ; I could not stay, and I am going back to him."

" But not for good, Adele ; not permanently ? "

" Yes," she said, with a deep-drawn breath, " permanently."

" Your father has forgiven your unfortunate marriage, then ? "

" Yes," she replied, in a low voice.

" It is noble and generous in him to forgive you. You are deserving of a happier fate."

Mr. Moore stepped beside them then, and said, coldly :

"Daughter, you had better drink a cup of coffee now and lie down. I will come in presently, after I have spoken to Mr. Warwick, if he will permit me."

"I shall be pleased, I assure you."

"I do not need assistance, papa. I am stronger than you think," and they watched her sadly as she wandered idly toward the house. Then Mr. Moore, addressing Philip, said :

"Mr. Warwick, I don't know how much of this unhappy affair you are cognizant of; but you must know of something connected with it."

"I know a very little, but do not feel authorized to mention even that since the affair is not mine."

"I am going to take Adele away from these unhappy scenes. Do you know what caused her illness yesterday?"

"I understood she was overcome at the intelligence of her husband's departure," Philip answered, suavely.

"Bosh!" exclaimed the old gentleman. "*Departure, indeed!*"

"You will not leave soon, I presume?"

"I do not know, it all depends upon her. If this scamp were not your step-brother, I should tell you what I think of him," the artist exclaimed, hotly.

Philip only smiled, and deigned him no reply.

Then these two men, who had been bitter foes for years, sat down upon the same bench, with their heads close together, and talked of their families, their prospects, their likes and dislikes, friends, foes, and numberless other topics. They exhausted theme after

theme, until the sun crept around in their faces and sent them off to the house.

Philip remained but a short time after this, owing to an engagement which he was to fill in Lawrence's stead. He went away from Woodside, knowing that before another week Frederic Moore would take Adele far beyond her husband's reach, and yet he forebore to utter the few words that would have sent the happiest, yet most regretful, woman in quest of the husband, who had all night been moaning with pain and calling Adele.

The preparations for departure began immediately. Adele and her father forebore any mention of Lawrence, as it was such a task for her to speak calmly of him or to even speak of him at all. So they arranged the home of her father for Julia, and Nettie was to accompany them. They were sitting out on the veranda one evening, when Mr. Moore, after a painful silence, said :

“ Adele, if I were you I would leave a letter here for him, it would look better and perhaps——”

“ Yes, father, I will leave a letter. Shall we start to-morrow night? ”

“ Yes ; we go to the city to-morrow night.”

“ It is so strange that mother—Mrs. Hayne—does not come to see me. She certainly knows that I have been ill.”

“ Has all she can do to take care of the baby, I presume.”

He did not mean to wound her, but the thought of Mrs. Warwick fostering *that child* was so odious to him that he took a satisfaction in speaking of it. She did not answer.

Then he said, tenderly : "Della, would you rather not go so soon ? I can wait."

"Oh, go—go soon. I could not leave him, father, after I have seen his face."

The next night while Lawrence lay holding his mother's hand and telling her how grateful he was that Adele had been kept in ignorance of his accident, and building castles upon the hope of going soon to his own sweet home, Adele and her father got into the train, and were whirled into the city where they expected to remain until Adele's health would permit her to undertake a voyage.

* * * * *

"I wonder, mother," Lawrence had said, "how Adele took the news of my supposed departure ?"

"Philip said she was quite overcome."

"Poor girl. Then I am glad she did not know the truth."

"Yes, it is as well. Phil told me that Adele and her father are *great friends*, Lawrence."

"*Great friends*, mother ? There must be some mistake."

"No, it is true ; he has been there nearly all of the time since you have been here."

"That is grand. I hope my return will not destroy their reunited happiness."

"We are going to bring Adele over to see you to-morrow, dear."

"I shall dream of nothing else. Then, mother, I think that will be a good time to tell her about Florence."

"Yes ; but don't forget that Florence belongs to me ; you gave her to me."

"I shall not forget."

The next morning, Lawrence, who was as eager as a child to see his wife, insisted upon their going immediately after breakfast to bring her over. He ordered his bed arranged so that she might sit near the cool window, yet close enough for him to touch her hand. He ordered a basket of luscious grapes and peaches placed upon the table to refresh her palate after her warm, dusty ride. He had them dress Florence in the most dainty garments of the exquisite juvenile wardrobe that they had bought for her. Florence must make a good impression. Had he been anticipating a visit from a queen, he could not have been more concerned about her reception. After much preparatory delay they were ready, and sent the carriage and Mr. Warwich over to Woodside. As he drove down the grassy carriage road, past the house, Lawrence called out: "Father, tell her she need not wait to make an elaborate toilet." And they all smiled at his eagerness, and thought if Frederic Moore could but witness his devotion, he would be only too glad that his daughter had married such a man.

After an hour had passed, during which time Lawrence almost blinded himself staring down the sun-emblazoned road, John Warwich came back—alone!

He did not wait to alight and go indoors; he drove up to the window, regardless of the beautiful grass the hoofs and wheels mangled, and told Lawrence how he had rung the door bells, tried to force the doors open, and attempted every possible entrance, and had finally, in sheer desperation, gone over to Moore Hill, where he found the frightened Julia and a letter.

Julia had said she "don' know nuffin 'bout it, only

dat Maas Mooah sed dat dey wuz gwine to trabbel, an' dey tuk ole marm long wid 'em."

Lawrence did not hear it; he was staring in blank stupidity at the letter, which he held open in his hand, and though he read it twice, thrice, and as many times again, he was still unable to comprehend it, and so he held it thus until he thought all the life had died out of him, and only his body remained to suffer.

CHAPTER X.

HIS DEATH-BLOW.

Is love a mockery? Have we no friend
Must we strive singly on unto the end?
Is no one trying his wrong ways to mend?
No one contented? Hearts made but to rend

—*Hannah B. Gage.*

WE are sometimes so cruel in our judgment of the misfortunes of others. If we could read the inner pages of the life history of our friends, we should not recognize them, perhaps, but if we did, we should be more lenient and considerate in our estimate. For, where the cover is of the brightest hue of humor, embellished with golden smiles, pretty songs, and brilliant words, there may be beneath the gaudy cover, pages blotted with tears, columns of heartache, paragraphs of shame, and chapters of regret. They smile to hide from the world their bitter sorrow, the defaced romance of their lives. And so we judge them by their exterior, just as we select a book from our library, by its title. But if it is our fortune or misfortune to read the story, how often

we turn the leaf upon the last page, and sigh our sympathy, mayhap drop a few tears, and close the book. That is the end—we forget it then. We think they will outlive it; it hurts them now, but the smart will not last long; and because they smile and sing and assume to be gay, we think they have forgotten. Ah! that is because they have grown used to the suffering, and do not waste their lives in a vain hope that the sting will ever wear away.

If we could only learn to be kind!

Lawrence read the letter, the shaft that Adele had left to hide her own grief. She had thought that it would be better to assume an indifference rather than pour her sorrow and abused love out upon paper, for him to *pity*, and for, perhaps, the *petite* unknown to smile over and call her “poor thing!”

No! they should not know how cruelly they had wounded her. She tore a leaf from an album, and wrote, tremblingly :

“LAWRENCE: My father and I are at last reconciled, and I am going away with him. You will not miss me much, Lawrie, your life will be filled with other interests. We have been very happy here, but it is best for me to go. I trust you will not put me to the annoyance of an embarrassing interview.

“ADELE.”

She did not leave a sign to tell how she had held her handkerchief beneath her chin, to keep the hot, scalding tears from blotting out the lines. She only said it was best.

And that was what Lawrence read and re-read and stared at, and was astonished at his wife and father for

playing him a silly trick at such a time. He looked into the good-natured face of his step-father, and said, half-reproachfully :

“Father, if this is a trick, you play it marvelously well ; but it is unkind.”

“My dear boy, do not think me so heartless ; it is no trick upon my part, believe me.”

“Then Adele is doing it to tease me for the deception we have practiced upon her. I wish she had not done it *now*.”

His mother stood by, with clouded face, and gently touched his shoulder :

“Lawrence, dear, may I see the message ?”

“Certainly, mother ; but I shall not worry. I will watch for her face and figure to emerge from her hiding-place among the trees, and shall not give the sprite the satisfaction of seeing that she has fooled me.”

“Lawrence,” his mother said, “the note does sound like a trick, but I would not be too sure of her coming, it will hurt you so,” and laid the letter in his hand.

“What, mother, would you have me believe *that* infamous cheat ? Why better to deal my death-blow outright than set my life at *that* price. No : the little minx *loved me*, mother,” and those two underscored words in his life romance, covered all the possibilities of Adele’s flight. They looked at him and knew that, though he smiled and would not believe, he had held in his hand his death-blow ! So they left him to watch for the face of his wife, which he believed would flash from amongst the shrubbery and flowers, and his mother motioned her husband away, and met him at the carriage entrance where they held a whispered colloquy regarding the errand.

"No, mother," John Warwick said, "it is no joke ; it is horrible, but it is true. The draperies are taken from the windows and doors at Moore Hill ; the furniture and pictures are all covered, and matting has displaced the carpets ; it must be horribly true."

"But what are we to do, John ? It will kill the boy," cried Mrs. Warwick wringing her hands in distress.

"Don't cry, Jennie," addressing his wife, tenderly ; "Lawrence will have all the grief, we must spare ourselves to comfort him."

"Yes, John ; but it will seem such poor comfort."

"Jennie," he began, "can you imagine what has prompted her to do it ? This cruel thing ?"

"I am afraid, John, that her father has had something to do with it."

"I know he has ; and I am going to drive over to Phil's and see if he can enlighten us a little."

He drove out through the barnyard and pasture, letting down bars and opening gates, that Lawrence might be spared this added expectation.

When he drove into the spacious yard, Phil, lounging in a hammock with little Dayne, came forward and waited respectfully for his father to alight. Mary came out and insisted upon her father coming into the house, but he declined, and proceeded at once with the subject that was filling his heart and mind.

"Phil," he said, interrogatively, "we are in great trouble at our house."

"Why, father, what is it ? Nothing serious I hope ?"

"Yes, it is very serious. Adele has gone away with her father, and left the most cruel note for Lawrence."

"*Adele gone away ?*" Mary whispered, dubiously ; and Philip said :

"*Father*, you are surely mistaken. She could not be so cruel."

"But I tell you it is true, hideously true. He is sitting there holding that note, and watching for her among the shrubs. He thinks it is a trick," the father cried.

"It *must* be a trick, father. Why, I was there only yesterday."

"She said nothing about it to you then? You and Adele were such good friends that I came here in hopes that you could enlighten me."

"She told me that her father had forgiven her, and was kind to her. I told her I thought it was generous and kind in him."

"Phil, I am afraid we did wrong in keeping the knowledge of the accident from her. I am afraid she felt piqued at not receiving a letter from Lawrence. Naturally a wife would, you know."

"Well, father, I kept it from her at your wife's instigation."

"Yes: but she suggested it at *my* instigation; the fault is mine. I thought it would be safer to tell her after he had regained consciousness. Dear, dear, we do things for the best and yet we are so helpless." And Mary burst out, regretfully :

"O Phil, why didn't you let me tell it?"

"Because, dear, we thought we were doing best as it was," he replied.

"But I knew it wasn't best," she retorted.

"No, that's it; if we would let the women and girls alone they would manage everything ten times better. Men have no business meddling with such delicate affairs," Mr. Warwick exclaimed.

"Where did you get the note, father?" inquired Philip.

"At Moore Hill, of Julia. I could not gain admittance at Woodside, so I went over there and found Julia putting away table linen and such things, and when I asked for her mistress she got frightened, and her teeth fairly chattered when she answered my questions." He idly switched the dash-board with his whip a few seconds, while Phil walked back and forth, with his hands thrust into his pockets. Mary gently stroked Dayne's brown curls as he stood leaning against her, looking with awe into his grandfather's face. It was an unhappy quartette.

"Well, well," continued Mr. Warwick, "this will not help us any, if you do not know anything about it, I may as well go back, and do what I can there. Mary, you must save your sunniest smiles for us now, we will need them."

"They will be artificial, father: I never regretted anything more sincerely in my life."

After Mr. Warwick left the drive he stood in the road several minutes undecided whether to go over to Moore Hill again or back to Wicksburr, but curiosity as to the turn Lawrence's hopes had assumed prevailed, and he drove back to his own home, where he found the young husband, sitting propped up against pillows, and his eyes bent upon the road, watching for some sign of the woman he had lost.

Mr. Warwick sent the horses away and entered the house. When he had seated himself beside Lawrence and had made every possible effort to attract attention, and failed, he spoke softly to the sick man, but he had to repeat his name before he received any attention.

"Lawrence! *Lawrence!*"

He turned the saddest eyes in his father's direction

eyes that seemed orbs merely, that had left their sight out upon the grass and flowers.

“What do you wish, father, you spoke to me?”

“Yes, I want to ask you if there is anything we could do that you think will help to clear up this thing ; it is mysterious, certainly.”

“What about?” he asked vacantly.

“Why ! about Adele !” John Warwick replied, with apprehension, at the same time motioning for his wife.

“Oh, about Adele? Yes, yes, Adele is coming over to-day ; yes.”

John Warwick and his wife stared in blank horror at each other, too astonished to reply, and before they had regained their self-possession Lawrence resumed, with the brightest smile :

“I’m sure she has loitered among her flowers, to bring me a sweet bouquet ; she knows I love flowers so —yes, she is coming to see me to-day. I dreamed of her all—”

“*Lawrence, my son!* you are not in your senses. Don’t talk so,” his mother cried, shaking him vigorously. His smile faded, and his eyes filled with unutterable woe.

“What was I saying, mother? What time is it? Why *don’t* Adele come?” he asked, in despair.

“Have you not given it up yet, my son?” his father asked.

He replied indignantly, “No, father! of course I have not. I shall not give it up until I have *proof that she has gone.*”

“But, Loll, you have proof right there in your hand ; is not that enough?” inquired John Warwick, patiently,

“*Oh!* you are all *so easily* deceived. I am here help-

less with my splintered leg, else I would not breathe until I had learned the truth. I should not be surprised if her father concocted this, without Adele's knowledge. You do not know her," he cried, with increasing passion, "as I do, else you would not be so quick to suspect her. Why, father, only last week, I asked her banteringly what we should do without each other, and what do you think she said? Why this, 'I don't know, Lawrie, what *you* would do, but *I* should *pray for death*,' and, mother, I believe her. She was no coquette, she was as sure of my love as she was sure there is a heaven. See how implicitly she has trusted me! Not one word of complaint has she ever uttered either at my tardiness or my business secrets. Why, even after our visit the other night, mother, she never asked one question, or betrayed a doubt; she was just as anxious to wait upon me, and make me comfortable as ever. No, sir!" he exclaimed, clinching that paper menacingly, "this is either a joke or a mistake, if it is neither one nor the other, it is *treachery somewhere*, and I would not give much for Frederic Moore's chance of life if ever I get my hands on him. *Oh!* someone go and find her!" he cried, in desperation, covering his face with his hands. Tears—real tears stole between his fingers and dropped upon his paper. They did not disturb him by asking any questions, they got up and started to leave the room. Evidently he did not desire to be left alone.

"Mother," he murmured, regretfully, "you used to always tell me what to do, your store of wholesome suggestions seemed never to diminish, why don't you advise me now? I am only a boy, in my helplessness."

She could not answer until she had wiped her eyes, and choked back a sob that threatened to rise.

"Oh, my boy ! if I only *could* advise or help you ! but don't you see, dear son, that mother's advice is forfeited when the boy takes a wife ? *She* is the one to go to for your advice, dear ; she is the only one capable of advising you in the majority of cases. It doesn't do for mothers to interfere, dear ; but in a sad matter of this kind, we would all do all in our power to help you ; but, Lawrie, what can we do, son, what can we do ? "

"No, it doesn't do for mothers to interfere ; but I am sure, if I had listened to your advice the other night, instead of laughing at your enthusiasm, I might be spared this unhappy trial."

"Perhaps," she said.

She cringed when he made that allusion ; it seemed to her that he must have read her inmost thoughts, and not for the world would she have thrust anything before his aching heart that savored of "I told you so." He was so unhappy, that she was sorry the conversation had ever taken place, and yet she was unwillingly haunted with the idea that *that mysterious* visit had had something to do with the strange disappearance of Adele. "Perhaps," she answered, softly, "but regrets for our actions will not bring back the past, we can only grapple with the future."

"Well, can't you suggest something !" with a tired ring in his voice.

"Yes, I can sug——"

"Oh, do, mother, do ; anything will be a comfort."

"Well, I think if we could see Julia, we might understand something more definite."

"Just the thing," he exclaimed, triumphantly, but scowled and concluded, "if I don't make her teeth chatter, it will be because she tells me the whole thing on the threshold."

"Now, look here, Lawrence," said his mother, "you know Julia's peculiarities as well as I do : she is a coward, and is not particularly bright, and if you hope to gain any information, you must not frighten her." He promised to be patient and calm, and Julia was sent for.

It was late in the afternoon when she arrived, with her sunbonnet of green and white checked gingham, slouched down on her face, and her narrow skirts fanning to their utmost capacity in the wind. She shuffled and dragged her heelless shoes over the gravel-walk, until she came to the door of the family-room, beyond which she could see Lawrence lying pale against the pillows that supported him. Her mental comment was, as she waited to be summoned, "Lawd ! ee is takin' it right smart, awful despurt, I reckon."

Mrs. Warwicb observed her standing there like a criminal waiting his sentence, and pleasantly bade her come in, saying, as she did so, "Julia, you see we have sent for you to help us out with our trouble. When did your mistress go away, Julia ?"

"Wednesd' evenin'."

"That is night before last ; why Philip said he saw her yesterday." Mrs. Hayne replied with some asperity.

"Wall, gees he did, mebby ; Massa Warwuk wuz ober at Moahs Hill, yesterday."

"Oh, then you mean they left Woodside Wednesday evening ?"

"Yes'm."

"Where are they going, Julia?" Lawrence cried, in his sad, despairing voice.

"Dunno, Massa Hayne."

"*Don't know, girl?* you certainly *must* know."

"No, I don' now, Massa Hayne; 'deed I dunno, honor bright, now shuah, Massa Hayne."

"For heaven's sake, Julia, didn't you hear them say anything about their journey?"

"Not very much, Massa Hayne. De ebenin' dat dey wuz leabin de house, ole mam she cummed ter me an' sez ter me, sez she, 'Jule, you jest stay hyar an' take keer ob Massa Moah's tings till I cum back, an' we'll lib hyar for ebber an' ebber, kase Massa Moah an' Missus Hayne dey ain't comin' back hyar eny more, neber.'"

Lawrence groaned and dropped his head on his hand.

"*Oh, if could walk.*"

"Lawrence, don't get excited. There is time enough yet."

"Julia, how did Adele take the news of her husband's absence?"

"Dunno what she did dew, but 'tother day I foun' huh insens'bul on de garden bench, an' she hez ben right pore'ly erber sence."

"Mother! they cannot have gone far; we must send some one after her, and bring her back. Julia, did she seem to hate to go, or did she go willingly?"

"Jest a dyin' ter go, Massa Hayne."

"*How do you know?*" he fairly screamed.

"Kase I heered huh say ter huh fader sez she, 'Oh, take me now, afoah I see his face.'"

They noticed Lawrence struggle, and fall back. When they reached him, he said, "I forgot—and tried to

rise ; my leg will have to be set again." His mother dropped at his side.

"Oh, Lawrie, are you in much pain?"

"Not there," he answered, "the *pain is here*, and it is killing me," he cried, with his hand upon his heart.

CHAPTER XI.

A SAD VISIT.

They sought her that night, and they sought her next day,
 And they sought her in vain when a week passed away,
 In the highest, the lowest, the loneliest spot,
 Young Lovell sought wildly but found her not ;
 And years flew by, and their grief at last
 Was told as a sorrowful tale long past,
 And when Lovell appeared the children cried,
 "See, the old man weeps for his fairy bride."

—*Thomas Haynes Bayly.*

How shall we estimate the complex state of emotions, sentiments, and passions that filled the mind and heart of Lawrence as he lay helpless and full of pain during all the long days of convalescence, the suffering and despair as he contemplated a future without Adele.

Those days were to him like all such days, when the white-winged angel, Hope, no longer flutters about the soul. He sat by the window—always at the window—and his smiles ceased to visit his handsome face, his voice was rarely heard, his eyes were always filled with gloom, and yet it did not bring the wife he loved and trusted.

Being incompetent to engage in pursuit himself, Lawrence trusted that to Philip, who, with inimitable

perseverance, scoured the country for tidings of Frederic Moore and his daughter. That is, Philip remained away from home, kept a neat and presumably accurate diary, in which he chronicled all his happenings, pursuits, and disappointments.

For two weeks Lawrence kept the Eastern ports under surveillance, in order to prevent the fugitives leaving the vicinity of home ; but all were premature in their search. Adele and her father remained in the city, only twenty miles from Hayne Home, for five weeks, and then they sailed in the steamer *Amanx*, and the dull splash and swish of the waters against the sides of the vessel could not drown the cries of Adele's heart as she watched the shore recede from sight.

Days and weeks passed, days and weeks of pain. Lawrence improved very slowly ; but at last, when there were no longer any blooming flowers in the garden, and the grass had begun to show signs of frost-bites, and the trees were stripped of all their green and brown foliage, he was permitted to walk about without the assistance of his cane, which had been his constant companion for weeks. He was treated with the greatest deference, not an expressed wish being ungranted.

Lawrence and baby Florence were inseparable all these days. At first it seemed to him impossible to even feel kindly or friendly toward the child whom he felt assured was, in some way, responsible for his unhappy fate ; but, as time grew on, it seemed that no one, much less a tender, humane man of Lawrence's temperament, could withstand the fascinations of the little prattler, as she climbed upon his chair and called him "papa." The eyes importuned, the hands supplicated, and the dimples charmed him ; but, beyond

all these, there was a something in her voice that soothed him, and at times acted like an opiate upon his memory. Little Dayne was with her constantly. There were only a few months difference in their ages, but he seemed her senior by years, owing to his rapid development and quick intelligence. The years grew on, and though Lawrence had ceased to hope, and had resigned himself to his cruel fate, he had not ceased to regret Adele's loss, nor censure himself for stupidly withholding from her the knowledge of Florence's mother's pathetic death and her sacred trust. When Florence was fourteen years old, and had been for six years a pupil in the little frame schoolhouse just across Mill Creek, her curiosity regarding her orphanage began to assert itself. Hitherto she had *seemed* totally indifferent regarding her parentage, and, strange to say, no one among the little busy tongues at school had ever essayed to enlighten or interrogate her. Perhaps it was because Dayne stood steadfastly by, ready to defend her from the little trials and petty grievances that sometimes make the pretty child's school-days irksome. Dayne was quite a king among his fellows. The boys admired his courage and never-failing diligence, and the shy little girls saw only his soft brown eyes and his tender graciousness. He never teased nor bantered them ; he always stood ready to defend them from the importunities of the older boys, and thus Dayne grew to be an acknowledged favorite wherever he went.

At this time, however, some stray gleam of uncertainty had asserted itself in Florence's mind, and clamored for notice. She assumed an indifference, and essayed to convince herself that she was Lawrence's daughter, though, in reality, she was *almost* convinced

that she was not. They had always told her she was his pet, his child, his little girl ; but she never once recalled a time when he had called her "daughter." Sometimes she reproached herself for this encouragement of a shallow suspicion, and told herself she was ungrateful for allowing such feverish fancies to intrude themselves, when all her life had been one of tenderest regard by every member of the homestead. At Aunt Prue's she was a very queen, and no slave ever bowed obeisance more humbly than Aunt Prue and her husband, John. They called her Sunshine, Rainbow, Jewel, and every other name that contained brightness and sparkling beauty.

On a beautiful morning in May, just as Lawrence took up his hat and cane to leave for his office, Florence bounded from the dining-room out upon the veranda, crying eagerly :

"Papa, papa, wait for me !"

He turned and looked upon a lithe figure making athletic effort to obtain a large sun-hat from the hall rack. Smiling at her eagerness, he returned to the hall, and, reaching the wayward hat, set it lightly upon her burnished curls, saying, pleasantly : "Your anxiety to hurry makes you nervous. What are you up to now, I wonder?"

"I want to ride a part of the way with you, papa. May I?"

"And walk back?"

For answer she only flashed a bright smile into his eyes, and clasped her hands about his arm.

"Rather warm for that, dear," he said, kindly.

"Oh, I don't mind the heat, papa. I shall come back through the woods."

"Come, then," holding his hand down for her to step in. She sprang into the cart as nimbly as she walked along the turf, and when Lawrence had seated himself beside her, he said :

"Now, I know this means something. What is it?"

The smile vanished, and left pallor where the roses had nestled in her cheeks. "You will think me unkind, papa, when I tell you that after all your tenderness and love, I have an idea that your lovely Adele was not my mother. Forgive me, papa. It must seem ungrateful in me, but I cannot help it."

He was trembling with surprise and apprehension. He allowed her to talk, because he had no wish to answer her directly.

"And this is why you came—to tell me this?"

"Papa, are you angry? I wish I had not spoken," she said, with a pained look in her pretty face.

"No, child; I am not angry, certainly. What has put this idea into your head all at once?"

"It did not come all at once, I think, papa," she said, encouraged by his gentle manner. "I think it must have been in my head for a long time. I can remember lying on the bank of Mill Creek years ago, and wondering if you had ever had a sorrow besides Adele's death. Did you speak?"

"No; go on."

"And of late," she continued, "my mind is so full of queer fancies and horrible things, and it makes me so unhappy, papa. I only want to know who I am, that is all, to stop this wretched preying upon my mind."

"My darling, this is a premature idea for a fourteen-year-old brain," he replied, with evident embarrassment.

"I am afraid you think it an unpardonable one."

"No, I do not, dear. I am sorry, very sorry indeed, that you should have thought of this thing. It is unpleasant for you, and makes it—well, Florence, it makes me miserable," he cried, in desperation.

"Then I am wretchedly sorry that I have spoken of it; you are always sad, papa, and do not talk much; but I have seen you look at me sometimes so strangely, and it has aggravated my ideas and made me so unhappy."

"And you, sweet child, have fretted your pretty hours away, in this uncertainty while I have looked *strangely* at you, wondering if the time would ever come when I must acknowledge the deception we have practiced upon you."

"You did it because you are kind."

"Yes, we only meant to be kind; and doubts have made you unhappy, Florence?"

"Oh, no, papa, not *unhappy*; how *could* I be unhappy when all my life I have had *such friends* and *such a home*?"

"But it has worried you, and you have wondered while I have thought you were no more aware of anything strange in your history than the gaudy butterflies you chase. I did not know you ever had a serious thought."

She looked serious enough now. After a brief silence, he resumed :

"Florence, you will be fourteen years old next Sunday?"

"Yes, papa."

"Will you promise not to worry nor think any unnecessary things about yourself until then?"

"Of course, I will promise if you ask me, papa."

"Then I do ask you, my darling. Be your own bright self and give no heed to these thoughts between this and next Sunday afternoon, and I will take you some place, where you have never been, and where I have not been for thirteen years. I cannot tell you *who* you are, but I will tell you how you came to me."

"Will you, papa? Oh, you are too good to me. Do you know, papa, I was afraid to speak to you of this, for I dreaded to hurt you as I knew it must."

"You deserve all I can give you, Florence, you have been my main hope—you and mother. Now, dear, this is far enough for you to walk. I cannot take you back, for I am late."

"Good-bye, papa, whatever my life might have been, I could not have been more lovingly cared for, and you will always be my papa, anyway."

He found no voice to answer, but put his arm about her slender shoulders and held her close while he kissed her over and over again. Then he assisted her to the ground, and with a good-bye gesture drove away.

Floss returned to the house, and all that day Mrs. Warwick noticed something strange in her manner. She sang snatches of songs, but her eyes held such a far-away look, and her manner seemed at times pensive. Then she would brighten up and dive at the piano and practice with an energy hitherto unknown. Occasionally Mrs. Warwick looked up from her sewing to find Florence's large, liquid blue eyes resting intently upon her face. The movement on the part of Mrs. Warwick seemed to bring the child back from her labyrinth of thought, and she would instantly smile and blush as though caught in the act of doing something dishonest,

and then resume her music more diligently than ever. Once Mrs. Warwich asked, without looking up, "Why are you looking at me so, Florence?"

"Why, grandma, how did you know I was looking?"

"I felt your eyes upon my face, dear. What are you thinking of?"

Reluctantly she replied: "I was wondering if I would ever look like you."

The elderly lady started perceptibly and answered, with considerable embarrassment:

"My dear Florence, what an absurd fancy!"

"Why is it absurd, grandma?"

"Well—because—because I hope you will make a fine woman some day, Florence."

The child's voice rang out the merriest laughter, and she sprang down from the stool and embraced her grandmother with warmest affection, crying gleefully, as she knelt at the lady's feet:

"Grandma, I guess you want a compliment. You deserve it, too. Why, grandma, dear, it *was* an absurd fancy, since I come to think about it. A little redheaded fox like me *might* make a fine-looking woman, but never a magnificent, whole-souled woman, like you."

"Oh, Florence, don't make my antique appearance the subject of your fancies; you should think of pretty things."

Florence looked at the old lady with undisguised admiration. "You are the prettiest ol——, I was going to say old lady, but you are not old, though you are the prettiest *grandma* I ever saw."

She heaved a sigh as she concluded, remembering that this lovely woman whose charm she lauded was *not* her grandmother. Then, oh, then—who was?

"What made you sigh, dear ; tired?" asked Mrs. Warwick, and Florence, not wishing to define her sigh, took refuge in a mischievous answer :

"Yes, I am not used to kneeling at people's feet," and laughingly went back to the piano. The conversation set Mrs. Warwick to thinking ; and she always remembered with pleasure that Florence had said she was the prettiest grandma she had ever seen.

The week passed slowly enough to Florence. She tried to read, to study, and attend her flowers and birds ; she visited Dayne at his home every day, and tried various plans to consume the days and hours.

To Lawrence the days flew like minutes ; he seemed but to have fallen asleep, when morning came and announced to him that he was one day nearer that dreaded visit. When the day arrived, the family all went to church in the family rockaway, and to two occupants of the Hayne pew, the service seemed interminable. They returned home and sat down to dinner. Philip and his family dined with them that day, and for once Dayne's presence was not welcome to Florence ; but Lawrence inwardly rejoiced at this delay, and when at last they did start away, Lawrence gave them the most pressing invitation to remain till evening ; but they had come over to spend their last Sunday with the family, for on the following Tuesday they were to go into the city to make that their permanent residence. When their carriage was out of sight, Florence turned to Lawrence, and, if eyes ever talked, hers certainly asked if he would go now. He must have understood this optical language, for he immediately arose, and said : "Mother, I promised Florence a drive this afternoon. We are going now."

"Very well, my son," she said, kindly, and added : "Father and I are going over to see Dick. John Wells told me this morning that Prudence was unable to come to church, because Dick was quite sick all night."

"Why, that's a pity ! Tell Dick I will drop in to see him this evening."

Then he ordered the cart brought to the door, and assisted Florence into it, and, seating himself beside her, took the lines and drove down the road in perfect silence until they reached a big gate with rusty hinges, and fastened with a padlock, whose keyhole was a network of cobwebs. The horse stopped, and Lawrence alighted.

"Going in there, papa? That gate is locked," exclaimed Florence.

He only smiled a little sadly, and, reaching in his pocket, produced a ring of keys, from which he selected one of queer pattern. Removing the gossamer lace-work from the interior of the padlock, he could not refrain from an exclamation of weariness or distress as he contrasted his life with that of the spider. He was tearing away the spider's home, just as his home had been torn from him, and how ruthlessly he was doing it ! His own loss came upon him so overwhelmingly that he would have gladly allowed the spider and his family to remain there in harmless peace, could he effect an entrance otherwise; but thirteen years ago, when he became assured that he should no longer need Woodside, he had the entrance at the south side of the farm fenced up, and this one he caused to be locked with a patent lock, and never for one day did he allow that key to leave his possession. He had never been

there since ; he had never had the courage to face the scenes of his joy and subsequent grief. So the spider had built his parlor, and after all his patient toil, his domain was infested by hands that sorrowed to cause a spider's grief.

As they jogged lazily along the grassy lane, he seemed so sad, and sighed so wearily, that Florence, who loved him above every earthly being, finding she could no longer restrain her tears, burst forth :

“ Papa, can you ever forgive me for causing this pain ? ”

“ Yes, dear, you need not chide yourself ; this must have come sooner or later, and I dare say it will come easier in company with you, than a visit alone would. I cannot tell you, Florence, how it pains me to visit this place. The past comes up before me like—it sounds affected to say a dream, but that is what it is, Florence, the most beautiful dream, and the awakening was so horrible ! ”

In a few minutes they had turned into a little lane that lent them a view of the house—just the roof above the trees.

“ Why, papa,” ejaculated the girl, “ isn't this the Woodside Cottage ? ”

“ Yes,” he replied. “ Have you ever seen it.”

“ Yes, Dayne and I rowed down the creek past here one day, and Dayne said it was Woodside. Isn't it lovely ? ” she exclaimed, in her enthusiasm, forgetting how its loveliness must hurt him. They drove up to the little wicket gate through which she caught a glimpse of the forbidden Eden. The hedge had grown to such a prodigious height that they could see nothing but the top of the house, and its dormer windows,

whose blinds were bleached and stained with the weather's caprices.

Florence observed his agitation, and, respecting it, climbed down from the cart and walked to the gate and peered through. She did not venture to intrude upon that sacred ground until he had opened the gate and bade her enter.

Here it was he had seen Adele last, with the sunlight falling upon her hair and the violets at her breast. He seemed to inhale their fragrance now. This little iron latch—it is rusty now—is the very same they had so often playfully quarrelled over, because she would not allow him to fasten it with the gate between them. There were the flower-beds, overgrown with weeds and grass. The walks were covered with dead leaves, and little patches of grass had forced their way through the thin layer of gravel. He opened the gate and told Florence to enter. Once inside they seemed to have called up a whole graveyard full of dead dreams. The place seemed peopled with invisible beings that whispered and made strange noises ; the dead twigs which had fallen from the trees, crackled beneath their feet, as though angered because their sacred precinct had been intruded upon.

When they had traversed the path that led to the door, they stood upon the porch and surveyed the surroundings. It was a sad sight, and Lawrence experienced the keenest regret, because he had not visited the spot sooner, and kept it from the ravages of decay.

“Papa, is it haunted ?”

Lawrence was not vexed, as Florence imagined, when she asked the question.

“ Haunted ! no, what with ? I wish it were. I wish

for one moment I could feel the touch of Adele's lips upon my own, or the clasp of her arms about my neck. No, Florence, the place is not haunted *to you*, but to me it is haunted by the Ghost of Happiness."

She had no reply, and they opened the door and entered the house. Lawrence walked to the door of the little parlor. There were the books they had read together, the small piano Lawrence had given her, the furniture, the carpets, the pictures, the bric-a-brac, the beautiful embroideries that Adele had wrought with her own white fingers, and the cuckoo clock that had cooed to Adele the hour that Lawrence would return from the office, and whose ticking had made an accompaniment for their bright hours together. They were all bright and shining then. Now they are covered with dust, and their bright hues, like Lawrence's hopes have faded.

He went from room to room, leading Florence by the hand. She did not encroach upon his thoughts ; she was mute as well as he.

"Look about you, dear, and examine what you like. I will sit down here and think." He had carried the duster in from the cart. Spreading it upon a sofa, he sat down upon it, and, resting his elbow on his knee, dropped his head upon his hand.

He had sat thus, he knew not how long, when Florence approached him timidly, and said :

"Papa, here is a picture of such a beautiful——"

"*Florence, that is your mother!*" The silence that followed this remark was painful and hard to break ; but Florence at last found voice to say :

"Papa, I thought it must be your wife. Is this my beautiful mother ?"

The child could not remember her mother, not one gesture nor even the tone of her voice, and even now, as she held that tiny locket in her hand, she could not remember one feature, but the picture with its sweet blue eyes and waving hair, seemed to entwine itself about her heart and entreat her love. When she had looked upon the picture for several minutes, during which time Lawrence forgot his own loss, she cried, with unfeigned regret : "Oh, if I only had her now !"

Her grief was genuine, and while her tears flowed fast and her heart throbbed wildly, Lawrence, with his arm about her waist and her head resting against his shoulder, told her the story of his life. It was with many intermissions of tears and murmured laments, and many ejaculations of sympathy from Florence, but the sad story was finally ended, and when it was finished, Florence had gained nothing but the knowledge that she was not his child ; that Adele was still living (so far as he knew) and that the beautiful face in the locket had been *her mother's face ! She did not even know her name.*

How she would love that picture ! She had no recollection of the thousands of kisses those lips had lavished upon her own ; she could not recall the sweet voice that told her baby rhymes and sang her lullaby ; but the instinct, the sweet influence that wraps its mantle about our hearts as we lie in the cradle, asserted itself and flamed into love for the picture, the beautiful, girlish face that peeped at her from the painted glass. Was the young mother, from her cloud-curtained window of heaven, watching this tender child pay her late tribute of love ?

"Papa—I shall always call you that"—and he invol-

untarily pressed her closer. "Isn't it strange that my father's picture is not here too?"

"It is very strange. It looks to me like there had been a picture taken out."

"Yes, it does; papa, may I wear this locket?"

"To be sure you may, dear; I shall get you a slender chain to suspend it from."

"You are so good to me."

The afternoon had waned; Lawrence had searched everywhere for the papers and casket that he had missed and regretted so long, but nothing more could be found, and, without a murmur or a sigh to tell of the wounded passion within, he went from the house, never daring to look back or he must have thrown himself on the threshold and wept his heart to rest.

CHAPTER XII.

A VISITOR.

The orchard lands of long ago,
 Oh, drowsy winds, awake, and blow
 The snowy blossoms back to me,
 And all the buds that used to be;
 Blow back along the grassy ways
 Of truant feet, and lift the haze
 Of happy summer from the trees,
 That trail their tresses in the seas
 Of grain that float and overflow
 The orchard lands of long ago.

—James Whitcomb Riley.

PHILIP, having found country life tame, and desiring to give his son the advantages of a better school, had moved into the city. His residence was beautifully

located on one of the boulevards, and was in reality quite an imposing habitation. Philip perfected arrangements for entering upon a business career. He had never given his attention to anything but real estate, hence it seemed practicable for him to devote what little time he cared to give to business, in that direction, for, despite Philip's shrewdness and his engaging type of character, he had done nothing more remunerative than to take care of the portion his father had given him, which, by the way, began to grow less, owing to his too luxurious habits. But he made loud assertions about his future prospects, and, if no one believed them, they had, at least, the goodness to make no contradictory comments.

So Philip took his little family, his servants, and horses, to the city, and began life in the manner he had so long wished.

The country homes seemed to change but slightly. Philip's pretty house was occupied by a family by the name of Russell. Their one child was a daughter, a few years Florence's senior, but, regardless of the disparity in their compositions as well as ages, they became fast friends. Cora Russell was a blonde beauty, and one of the most striking type ; beautiful, brilliant, and wealthy, she was the fashion wherever she went.

One day the girls conceived the idea of taking a trip to Italy and Spain. Florence, who never asked for a favor that was refused, knew that after they had found a chaperon, there would be no objections raised to their project. Mrs. Russell, a worldly but kind-hearted woman, consented to take them under her care and spend the year in beautiful, sunny Italy.

The days that followed were not at all tedious to the

girls, so full of delightful expectation. But an elaborate review of them might not interest the reader ; so we will pass them over, knowing full well the delights they felt at the piles of mull, lace, embroidery, ribbons, silks and velvets, that were being rapidly converted into a fashionable tourist's wardrobe ; the trips to the city where, after the day's shopping was finished, Florence enjoyed tantalizingly short interviews with Dayne ; the visits to the *modiste*, and all the circumstances, both pleasant and disagreeable, attending the preparations for such a visit.

At last they were off, and what a pretty sight they presented as they sat in the railway carriage, bidding adieu to their friends with childish promises of long letters, decorous behavior, sweetened with red cheeks and saucy dimples !

A few days later Mrs. Warwick, who was quite disconsolate without Florence's invigorating society, had put on her hat and gloves to pay a visit to Dick, who had fallen a prey to the dread disease consumption. He never went out now, but he sat all day in a large chair by the open window ; sometimes they drew him out upon the cool veranda, where he loved to sit and listen to the birds, and watch them flit about among the trees and boughs he knew and loved so well.

When Mrs. Warwick had closed the door and stopped to hoist her parasol, she observed a man's figure coming quickly toward the house. She waited until he should make known his errand, and in the meantime she scanned his figure closely. The man did not see her evidently, but strode on toward her with a determined air and a briskness that created an uneasiness upon her part. But before her eyes had penetrated

the mystery, the stranger suddenly looked up, and exclaimed :

“Mother !”

“Oh, my boy !” and the ring of her voice echoed the gladness of her heart, and the joy of once more embracing her son. He held her in his arms, his eyes taking in every line of her fair sweet face and the silver threads that had scattered themselves profusely among the brown locks, that had such a persistent ripple in them.

“Charlie, Charlie !” she cried, “you have come back at last to stay with me ; I thought I had lost both of my boys, but I have them back again !”

This time her eyes refused to keep back the tears of gratitude that arose, and, for lack of self-possession, she was silent. Charlie was a man of few words, and knew so little how to comfort, much less cheer a woman, that he was quite at a loss how to answer her. Fortunately, however, he hit upon a subject that invariably drew forth all the valiancy in his mother’s stoical nature, the subject of Lawrence’s sorrow.

“Loll met with a terrible misfortune, didn’t he ?”

“Terrible, and cruel ! You can’t imagine what he has suffered and what I have suffered for him.”

“Yes ; I can imagine both. Where *is* Loll ?”

“At his office in town ; did you not stop ?”

“No ; I saw no one recognized me, and hurried home.”

They had walked back into the parlor, and sat upon a sofa. The mother’s hand still clasped that of her boy, as though afraid that its release would signal his flight. They forgot Dick and Lawrence and all else, so entrapt were they in each other. Charlie gave her a brief

recital of his travels, and, to account for his bronzed face, told her that he had come from India home.

They had not heard from him for more than a year, and though Mrs. Warwick spent whole nights in tears and prayers for her boy, no one was the wiser, for she stolidly and invariably declared that sooner or later he would unexpectedly drop among them, and repay them for all their anxiety and suspense. And here he was sitting beside her, his hand in hers, telling her how he often longed for home and its delights.

Two hours passed away ; she told him where she was going, and of poor Dick's affliction, and was gratified at the readiness he displayed to visit his old comrade and nurse. As they walked toward the Hayne Home cottage, Dick, who espied them, called faintly to Aunt Prue to come and tell him who was coming with Mrs. Warwick.

Prudence came stalking—she never walked—out upon the porch and stood at Dick's chair, but did not utter a syllable.

“I hope it is not a new doctor. Mrs. Warwick is too kind-hearted ; they will kill me with medicine.”

Gradually an expression stole into Aunt Prue's face which, in any one else, would have been called a grimace, but it was really Aunt Prue's best smile, her most joyous expression. In her monotonous but kind voice, she exclaimed :

“Wall, I guess you won't want no medicine fer a while, Dick ; he's got lots o' whiskers, but I know'd him the minit I set my eyes on 'im, it's Charlie !”

Dick trembled, and had no voice to speak the words that rose to his lips. He sat perfectly still and watched the figures advancing more rapidly toward the house.

He traced in the well-built figure, the old gait, the indolent swing, which had given Charlie the unmerited title of "Slow Charlie."

How often Dick had sat alone and recalled the good old times, and the many kindnesses Charlie had done him! He had always hoped to, in some way, repay the Hayne boys for their unselfish generosity to him, and now here he sat, hopelessly maimed for life, unable to offer anything in return for all that he had received from them.

As Charlie drew near the porch, Prudence, with one of her dismal smiles, went out to meet them. She said nothing; indeed, there was nothing for her to say, for when her eyes sparkled and grew moist, and her voice shook, they knew all that her words would convey; so she only gave him her hand, which he took in one of his, but, contrary to all expectations, especially hers, he put his other arm about her waist and kissed the faded cheek, saying, lightly:

"What is it about the bad penny?"

The meeting between Dick and Charlie was very touching and very sad. Charlie was distressed to find Dick in such a state, and, seeing the delight his presence gave the sick man, he lingered until late in the evening so as to meet Lawrence on his return from the village. Mrs. Warwick, however, could not tarry, so she returned home, leaving Charlie to entertain Dick. The afternoon had waned and it was getting dusky. They were watching for Lawrence's cart, when suddenly Charlie sprang up, and said:

"Bet that's Loll!"

Sure enough, the horse was jogging along at an easy pace some distance from the house. Charlie told Dick

to expect him to-morrow, and away he went through the twilight toward the corner of the great yard. Lawrence stopped to inquire about Dick, and noting the flush on the usually wan cheeks, and mistaking it for a bad omen, went away saying: "Poor Dick's days are numbered." His call there gave Charlie time to get pretty well down the road. As Lawrence came up behind the solitary figure walking at the side of the road, he could not but recognize the resemblance to his brother and sigh over it. He looked at the man twice and was getting ashamed of his impertinence, when the stranger said:

"Hello, stranger! Can't you give us a lift?"

"*Charlie, Charlie!*" Lawrence cried, and, throwing the reins over the seat, sprang to the ground in less time than I can tell it. They shook hands, but the grip of these two strong hands contained more warmth and welcome than any other greeting could have done. It seemed so strange to meet by the roadside after sixteen years' separation. They did not get into the cart again; it seemed too small to carry the big swollen hearts in their manly breasts, and so they walked the remainder of the way home, Lawrence leading his horse by the bridle.

As they sat at the dinner-table that night every one was thinking of the shadow, that lay like a pall over their home. They were grateful for this reunion, but there seemed a ghost or an invisible presence among them, that would not let them be happy. Mrs. Warwick said, thinking of Florence:

"Floss ought to be here to-night."

"Floss?" Charlie said, in surprise. "Who is that?"

"Our sunshine," Lawrence replied. "Mother took

a little girl into our home after my trouble, and we have become very fond of her."

"Where is she now?"

"Spending the year abroad with some friends," replied Lawrence. "It surprised you?" he asked.

"Yes; the idea occurred to me, that—you might have had a daughter—I never knew."

"No, Adele left me nothing—but a ruined life!"

"Brace up, old fellow, there are queer dispensations in this world, and who knows what may happen?"

Ah, who knows? The remark was dreary condolence, but it was so well meant that Lawrence could only smile without replying.

After dinner was over the brothers went out into the garden to smoke their cigars; they sat down near the spot where they had sat when the one had expressed his dissatisfaction at the other's prejudiced fancies.

"Ah, this seems old-fashioned, Charl., as long as we cannot see each other's faces; though, with all my sorrow, I believe time has dealt more leniently with me, though we both look old."

"Yes, both look old; getting old, too."

"Ah, dear, don't say such a thing! I am very touchy on that point; you can't imagine, Charlie, what an intolerable thought it is to feel myself getting old, actually old, and still no wife." Lawrence's face was contracted with pain. Charlie could not see it, but he knew that it must be so, because the pain was in his voice.

"Loll?" Charlie began, "What caused it all? Do you mind talking about it?"

"Oh, no. Sometimes it seems that I *must* speak of it, but poor mother has suffered so much for me, and I

try to let her think that time is helping me, but since my visit over there," he motioned with his hand toward Woodside, "it seems that I just must speak of it. I had never been at Woodside, never had seen the house since that fatal morning sixteen years ago, until a short time since when I took Florence over to the place, and told her all about it. The sweet child had become possessed of the idea that I was not her father as we had taught her to believe, and so I took her there and told her the story of my life."

"And sad enough one I'll warrant," Charles exclaimed, gloomily.

"Yes, you are right. I have read of sorrows like it; but the reality seems so cruel."

"Did she leave you voluntarily, or did her father take her by force?" Charlie asked, curiously.

"She left willingly, and penned me such a cruel note. I could not believe her capable of anything so treacherous."

We need not repeat the story, as Lawrence told it, broken by comments from Charlie, but he left out nothing concerning Adele and himself. When he had finished and sat with his head drooped forward on his breast, Charlie exclaimed: "Say Loll, you said they told Adele that you had gone away?"

"Yes," Lawrence replied.

"And never told her better?"

"Why you see, they went over to tell her and she was gone."

Charlie got up and kicked a boulder out of his path and walked moodily to and fro. "Say," he exclaimed suddenly.

"Well, what?"

"Oh, nothing—um. I reckon you and Phil are good friends?"

"Oh, yes. Phil was my only resource at that time."

Charlie turned and looked crossly at his brother, and murmured something which sounded very much like "pack of geese," and resumed his walk.

The days passed rapidly. Charlie and Lawrence went into the city frequently. Phil was demonstrative in his manner toward Charles. He seemed incapable of doing enough for their entertainment. They always called at the house to see Mary, but Charlie would not accept Philip's hospitality, though he declined in such a *nonchalant* manner that Philip had no idea of the scorn Charles felt for him.

Dayne and Charles became fast friends, and were inseparable when the latter visited the city. "Uncle Charles" was Dayne's king.

One day Charlie announced the terrible fact that he was going away again, news which fell upon his mother's heart like ice-drops. Lawrence had seemed so much improved in spirits since his brother's return, that she had hoped his stay was permanent. And now he was going away! He saw how deeply she regretted his departure. So he said: "Mother, you acted for the best in Loll's case, I suppose, but you made a terrible mistake."

"Why, my son. How? We did everything that was possible."

"Yes, but you didn't do it right. It would never have happened if lynx-eyed Charlie had been here."

"Well, it can't be helped now," she added, with a sigh.

"Perhaps not. But, mother, I am going to find Adele, and bring her back."

His mother stepped back in dismay at his announcement. "Even if you find her, she will not come," and she shook her head in despair.

"Don't tell Loll, for if I fail, it will be a double disappointment. I'll spend every cent I possess but what I find her, whether I bring her back or not."

"Why, son, where could you begin? It is such a mystery."

"Well, in the first place, I shall go to the Hall of Arts, in D—shire. His picture, 'The Loneberg Castle,' was on exhibition there for two years and is doubtless there yet. If I can't obtain his address there, I can at least trace him from there."

"It is a great undertaking, my son."

"Ain't it, though? But I'll enjoy it, after I catch the scent."

The next day he visited Dick and made known all his plans. Dick listened, enraptured with the idea. This scheme of Charlie's was what he had dreamed of and thought of for months, but here he was tied hand and foot by a disease from which there was no escape, and only his mind and his great, big heart to rove around in search of the woman who he knew, if the truth were told, loved the sorrowing Lawrence even as he loved her.

"So, Charles, you are going away again? I should be very sorry under other circumstances, but I am glad that you are going, and I pray God, Charlie, you may find her."

Lawrence was loud in his protestations when he heard of Charlie's intended departure. He begged like a little child for him to stay, but Charlie silenced him by saying:

"Loll, I've got work to do. It may take me a great

while, and it may not take me long at all ; but it must be done, and when I come back, I'll tell you *my story*," and before Lawrence could answer, he was gone !

Lawrence reflected : "Wouldn't it be queer if old Charlie should have had a love affair ?"

How little he dreamed that the love affair was his own, and that Charlie was leaving the rest and comfort of home for the rough, tiresome life of travel, to trace up another man's wife !

CHAPTER XIII.

DICK'S DEATH.

Home they brought her warrior dead ;
She nor swooned, nor uttered cry ;
All her maidens watching, said :
"She must weep or she will die."

Then they praised him soft and low,
Called him worthy to be loved,
Truest friend and noblest foe ;
Yet she neither spoke nor moved.

—Tennyson.

GIRLHOOD, through its entire period is beautiful, but at no time is it more interesting than at fifteen. We all like to look back to that epoch in our history ; no matter what ills attacked us then, or what crosses we carried, we like to look back to it as upon a picture faded and old. A girl at fifteen is not personally as attractive as at some other ages, for she is, as mothers frequently lament, "just at an awkward age." She is too young to wear long dresses ; too old to wear them short ; then

they must come just to the tops of the shoes, where they display any awkwardness in her gait, or a too rapidly growing foot. The entire toilet is affected by the half-growth of the girl, but, as if to atone for this grievance, nature has bedecked her with a crown of wit, humor, and gladness, and this is the age that makes us wonder what the future will do for her. What kind of a woman will she make?

A girl at fifteen is like a half-blown flower. It is so beautiful now in its half-developed loveliness, we dread to see it expand in the fullness of its beauty, lest a rough wind come, and, striking it, whirl its petals one by one away, until there remain only the stem, desolate and ruined.

No more charming maidens ever grew than the two lithe, bonny, free-hearted girls, whom we saw last in the railway carriage *en route* for their tour through the beauties and historical localities of Italy. Their friendship had strengthened and grown into a deep affection for each other. Cora's blonde loveliness was such a contrast to Florence's dark beauty that they made a most striking pair. They returned from the mountains happy and gay. They had quaint things to tell, and amusing anecdotes to relate to the ever-ready ears of Dayne, who spent half of his summer vacation at Wicks-burr, hunting and fishing, having for his companion a school friend, Walter Reynolds, a gay young lad of twenty years. The boys were still at the country-place when Florence and Cora returned home. The days that followed were halcyon days to them. There were trips down the stream, now swollen with the August rains, in light boats, followed by charming little dinners in the woods, rambles, grapevine swings, and

a visit to some uncanny nook, just to produce little rapturous sensations of fear and romance, made up the routine of the happy, care-free days "that made that summer sweet."

The boys admired Cora Russell greatly ; she sang well, danced superbly, and was not only a fluent talker, but her mind was a repository of choicest, sweetest thoughts, and she expressed them in a manner both touching and graceful, not to say flowery. Dayne was too hopelessly in love with Florence to see Cora's loveliness, although he was charmed with her agreeableness. Cora entertained a sincere regard for Walter, and consequently, was utterly oblivious to Dayne or his sentiments. Floss was *evidently* not burdened with an overweening fancy for any one ; but could we have invaded the sanctity of her pretty pink and white bed-chamber, where, night after night, she opened the little gold locket and peered lovingly upon a *new* face, which was not her mother's face, but which smiled at the dead face opposite, we should have learned that Dayne's love, in all its youthful ardor, was reciprocated. As for Walter—well Walter liked all the girls, and while he did not admire Cora Russell one whit more than a dozen other girls, yet Cora was kind to him, tendered him the most agreeable hospitality, and Walter, knowing so well Dayne's affection for Florence, lavished his most respectful attention upon Cora, and she, poor susceptible girl, gave him all her loving little heart without the asking, and basked in the sunlit hope that he had given his in sly exchange.

Thus the months passed away. When it was too cold to enjoy the delights of country life, the girls went to the city and attended dancing school, card

parties, and entertainments, with the ever-watchful Mrs. Russell for chaperon.

The winter passed and spring rains fell and moistened the thirsty, frozen roots of trees and flowers. The grass had only begun to peep out in little verdant patches, when poor, loyal Dick Turner died. His death was looked for and dreaded; yet it made the blow none the lighter for Aunt Prue and John Wells, to whom Dick had always shown the tenderest respect. Dick was only a poor man, but no Earl was ever shown tenderer regard or more loving care than this great, honest Dick whom everybody loved.

The morning of the day he died, he called Aunt Prue to his side, and said :

“Auntie, I shall go very soon now——”

“Don’t talk of it, Dick, you hain’t goin’ yet,” Prudence said, with dry eyes, but aching heart.

“Yes, Aunt Prue, I feel quite differently this morning from any time yet, and though I am not in the least pain, yet that is a certain sign of the end. I want to talk to you, Auntie, while I have strength. There is so much I should like to say, and, dear, I must explain something to you which I can trust you to keep. It must not be known, Auntie, not yet; perhaps some day it will be best to tell it, but keep it locked tight in your breast, Aunt Prue, until that time comes.” He stopped talking for her to wipe the cold moisture from his face.

“Dick, yer gettin’ excited. Can’t yuh leave it till another time?”

“No; this is the time. What did you do with the papers I gave you the other day, Auntie.”

“Put ‘em in my chest an’ locked ‘em up. Yuh said nobody mus’ see ‘em.”

"Yes, dear, that was right. I want them now, will you get them?" She straightened her angular form and stalked sorrowfully out of the room. She got the papers but somehow the sight of the things in that old, worm-eaten chest, affected her strangely, and she bowed her head on the lid and wept; wept tears that she would not have had anyone see for all the world. Dick's baby clothes were in that chest. His little shoes with the toes worn through; little dresses that were white once, but yellow with age now; little stockings that once were blue, but now faded to almost white; and the loved form that once was clothed with these little garments was lying below with death's cold moisture standing on face and limb. It seemed more than she could bear; she must empty her heart of all this aching fullness; the tears that fell like rain had been gathering in her heart for weeks, and now they had burst their bonds, there was no help for it, they must flow. She did not notice that teardrops fell upon the papers she held in her hand. She gathered them up and went down-stairs. There were no trace of tears on her face, but there was a perceptible redness in her eyes, and a quivering of the lips which Dick failed to notice until after he made a remark that he would have given worlds to recall. When she handed him the packet he said, thoughtlessly: "Why, Auntie, these papers are wet." Then he looked into her face and smiled sadly at the answer.

"I stopped to sprinkle the dew plant as I passed."

No wonder he smiled, as though Aunt Prue would stop to care for plants when God was sprinkling death's dew upon her boy.

He took the papers and spread them open before

him ; his poor, thin hands trembled so he could scarcely hold the fluttering papers while he explained their contents to Prudence. They were papers that he had written after Charlie went away a year before ; he had looked over them often to assure himself that all was clear and plain, that nothing of importance was left out, and now, for the last time, he examined them and called upon Heaven to witness his oath as to their truth and genuineness.

“Now, Aunt Prue,” he said, “you will keep these papers until something turns up to make this knowledge necessary. It is better not to tell it now, because it will only bring grief and shame to the Warwichs. Perhaps when Charlie comes back he may do something to right this wrong. I scarcely think it probable, however, as, in case Adele does not come back, there will be little use in bringing disgrace in connection with their grief, and, if Adele *does* come back, Philip will understand by Charles’ interest in the affair, that Charlie does not intend to be trifled with. But, auntie, perhaps it would be just as well for you to mention to Charlie that you possess these papers, and, in case of necessity, he will call for them. Now, Aunt Prue, will you put your name to these, and then I am done with them.”

Aunt Prue took down the pen and ink and wrote her name as a witness to the death-bed oath, then arose and, putting them into a drawer, turned the key and put it into her pocket. She returned and sat beside Dick, who said, ruefully :

“That is all the will I have to leave you, auntie,” and she thought, “that and a broken heart.” But she could not answer him ; it seemed that her heart was

drying or burning up, and that never again should she see anything bright or beautiful in life.

The friends who came every day to see the sick man began to gather in. Mrs. Warwick came, bringing with her a basket of choicest delicacies to tempt his palate, but a sight of the eyes, glassy in their deathly lustre, and the cheeks, with their hectic flush, told all too plainly that Dick would need no more of her tender kindnesses and loving attention. He took her hand, and said : “ Dear Mrs. Warwick, I have neither words nor breath to thank you for all your goodness to me. Tell Charlie that, with my dying breath, I pronounced him the greatest hero, the grandest man I know. Tell him I left my good-by for him with you.”

When Lawrence and his step-father came, he had kindest, tenderest words for them as for everybody who came. Philip and Mary came immediately upon receipt of the message, but were too late. John Wells, a quiet, inoffensive man, too tender-hearted to sit by the dying man, had gone out to the end of the house where an old-fashioned chimney stood rigid and bleak, and there in the corner by the chimney, he sat with his arms folded across his breast, his hat slouched down, and the great tears glistening untouched from his eyes to his chin. He was the picture of abject despair.

Dick's voice grew weak ; his breath came fainter ; he was slowly and surely sinking.

O, heaven, this terrible going out of life's fire ! To sit by the couch of our loved one and see the last faint, flickering spark go out, with no power on earth to rekindle it, or hope to fan it into flame ; nothing, nothing but to sit and see it growing smaller, fainter, feebler, until at last the one little flickering ray grows dim, and

then dies out. All that is left to us is the memory ; the memory of the sweet, the good and the best! not the faults and the shortcomings, only the good and the true. These are all we have, but they are sweetened with the consciousness that there awaits, beyond, something better than this, and we bow our poor heads and try to calmly say, "Thy will be done!"

When Dick's last breath had taken its flight, friends approached the bed to perform the last kindly offices for the dead ; but Aunt Prue, without sob or tear, pushed them away, and reverently drew the spotless linen over her boy's dead face.

Do not rob her of her last act of love ; let her sweeten her sorrow with the offices of affection which she will never more attend. Her eyes were dry, but their burning depths and the white set lips bespoke such anguish and grief as could not be soothed by tears.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE MEETING ABROAD.

Farewell, farewell ! see, I must die.
 With fainting for the loss of thee.
 Lost love ! restore me with a sigh,
 And let thy kisses rain on me.

Farewell ! and when the ocean wide.
 Hath parted us, as it must part,
 One sigh will draw me to thy side,
 One kiss will heal my broken heart.

—Clement W. Scott.

WHEN Charlie left Hayne Home to go in search of the lost wife no one recognized the enormity of his under-

taking more than he did himself. It was a hazardous beginning, and who could tell whether it might not be a perilous ending? It did not matter to him ; he had set his heart on finding Adele, and, as he had said, he would spend every cent he possessed before he would give it up. He might not find her, it is true ; but when he could no longer search he would have the assurance that he had done his best.

He traveled constantly, going from one place to another, only stopping long enough at each place to convince himself that he was not on the right track. After sixteen months of search he stopped at Florence. Not that he dreamed of finding them there, but he had traveled all through these parts before, and everything Florentine having a peculiar fascination for him, he was induced by love of the city to tarry a while.

One day, when he had accidentally met a former traveling companion and they were starting out for a visit to the Villa Careggi, where they had, six years before, felt awed at its imposing, antiquated grandeur, with its cold polished floors and painted historical walls, they noticed a carriage preceding theirs containing a party of tourists, and were still commenting upon the probable nativity of the party, when they all came to a sudden stop at the entrance of the villa. When they were inside the walls they stood admiring the trees, the flowers, and the terrace overlooking the garden, when, suddenly, Charlie's companion said: "Jove, what a face!"

"Where?" Charlie inquired. But he need not have asked, for his friend was standing almost rudely staring at a young girl before him, who belonged to the party mentioned.

Charlie looked at her curiously, and replied: "She is beautiful. Wonder where they are from?"

He did not dream that he stood so near the object of his wanderings.

After they entered the villa they became separated from the party, and when Charlie and his friend emerged from the gardens the other carriage was gone.

Days passed by, and still Charlie lingers in the historical scenes of Florence. For perhaps the sixth time he visits the San Martino. There is something about that little edifice that soothes and comforts Charlie Hayne. Perhaps it is because in this church Dante was married to Gemma Donati, the peevish, fretful woman, who made him unhappy and discontented. Charlie loved to listen to the tales the old sacristan evidently loved to tell, and, this morning, standing where he could command a good view of the paintings in the lunettes above the altar, he was completely buried in dreams.

There were visitors coming in, whom, at first, he did not heed; but presently a sweet, soft voice said: "Isabel, I do not think you appreciate this opportunity. It is worth more than all your studies in history."

"Why, yes, mamma, I think I do. Why do you doubt it?"

"Because, my dear, you seem so absent-minded this morning." And then the younger voice whispered something he could not hear, excepting the words "Villa Careggi."

He was still looking towards the frieze in the lunette, but he no longer saw it. He was burning with curiosity to see the face of the speaker, who, he was almost certain, was the beautiful young girl he had seen on the occasion of his visit to the Villa Careggi. He

waited, however, a period of politeness, then he turned in a *nonchalant* manner and stood face to face with the lovely girl, who was, as he had anticipated, the girl with the strikingly beautiful face.

The lady and gentleman who accompanied her had walked away and stood with their faces from him. The girl looked confused when he observed her eyes bent so searchingly upon his face, and turned her attention to something else, but not until he had noticed the pink flush that overspread the pretty cheeks.

This girl was not over fifteen years of age; but her face, in its sad repose, was striking. She seemed incapable of smiling, and her dark eyes looked unfathomable to him in the shadows of the church. Her hair was not brown, not even a light brown. It was of that shade of yellow which, in the sun, flashes forth an indescribable brilliancy, dazzling and beautiful. Her willowy grace and easy manner might have been envied by many belles of fashion.

She wandered aimlessly about the church, and finally joined the elder couple who were starting toward the outer door. Charles stood lost in a dream. What a comfort a daughter like that might be to a man! He watched them as they passed out of the church, and then he bethought himself of the length of time he had been there himself, and idly wandered away. Again he had stood beside Adele, but did not see her face. The interesting trio had gone a few steps from the door when the old gentleman, depending greatly upon his cane for support, set it down upon a little stone that rolled and sent his cane whirling out of his hand. But for the quick movements of the lady and her daughter he must have fallen prone upon the ground. He regained his footing,

and, by the time Charlie reached them, the old gentleman was walking slowly, and with a painful effort. Taking off his hat to the ladies, and scarcely looking into their faces, Charles said :

“ If you permit me, sir, I will see you safely to your lodgings.”

The unfortunate man turned and accepted his offer with profuse thanks. When he laid his hand upon Charles’ arm, the latter recognized Frederic Moore, and knew that his search was ended, whether he accomplished his object or not.

“ I think I have sprained my back. I am rheumatic, and have been more than usually exposed here. Our lodgings are cold and poor, but they are the very best we could obtain.”

“ Have very poor ones myself,” Charlie anwered.

Frederic Moore showed him the way to their rooms, the ladies coming close behind. It seemed sometimes that Charlie must satisfy this curiosity to see Adele’s face, but not for worlds would he have had her recognize him then.

When they reached the rooms, and Charlie had put Frederic Moore upon a couch, and tendered him what little services lay in his power, he turned to take his leave, and to bid them call upon him if he could be of any further service. The afflicted man had fallen asleep under the warm influence of the decoction Charlie had prepared for him. The latter had no intention of making himself known then ; but when he first saw Adele without her bonnet, he could not—having been enduring this suspense so long—he could not repress a faint ejaculation of surprise. She was, he thought, the most superbly beautiful woman he had ever seen. Her

hair, once so sunny and fair, was now gray, not sprinkled merely, but gray in its entirety ; but while her hair had whitened with sorrow, it seemed that her face was too sweet to be lined with care, so it still remained beautiful in its fresh pink and white perfection. Her dress was of some soft gray texture, that hung in graceful folds and draperies, and showed to advantage the finely rounded figure.

Charlie looked at her one moment, a moment in which he thought of a hundred things, belonging to the dreary waste of years through which they had passed. What a mockery this separation was after all ! How fool-hardy it all seemed ! A cruel, heartless deception, as transparent as glass, had caused all this ! The most intricate plot could not have caused more sorrow without bloodshed. For the first time in all these years, Charlie realized the mistake he made in leaving home when he did. We make such stupid blunders sometimes in our efforts to preserve peace and ward off grief. He had gone away, feeling that if the unfortunate encounter with Philip became known it would mortify and grieve Mrs. and Mr. Warwick. No matter who had to bear the blame, it would be equally painful to them. So he had exiled himself all these years to prevent a scene, and this was the result. A man in America with gray sprinkled locks and deep-lined brow, lonely and sad ; and, here before him, a woman who should be crowned with golden brown hair and smiling face, was the picture of hopeless suffering. This was the result of his sacrifice. Surely, if he marred his first attempt, he knew better now, and might he not accomplish this reunion ? He prayed that he might. He opened his mouth to

speak. She turned white as the collar she wore, and said, faintly :

“I know you ; you are Charles Hayne.”

CHAPTER XV.

CHARLIE'S DISCOVERY.

The years of man are looms of God,
Let down from the place of the sun,
Wherein we are weaving always,
Till the mystic web is done.
Weaving kindly, but weaving surely
Each for himself his fate,
We may not see how the bright side looks,
We can only weave and wait.

—*Anonymous.*

ADELE had said, with beating pulse and white face : “I know you. You are Charles Hayne.”

Charlie knew that it required an effort for her to speak calmly, but he did not guess the one tithe of pain the mention of that name caused her. He was taken so completely by surprise that he could frame no answer, so he bowed his head, and waited for her to drive him away or bid him stay.

“How came you here ? Have they sent you to spy upon my daughter and me ?” she asked, looking into his eyes with a piercing firmness.

“No, madam. They do not know you have a daughter, and they have not sent me,” he replied meekly.

“How came you here ?” she said, authoritatively.

"I have spent all my late years in travel. I have never been at home since—since——"

"Since our marriage. I understand."

"Since that time, until sixteen months ago."

"Did you know who we were when we were in the church?"

"No, madam, I did not. When your father spoke to me first I knew him; but that was after I had offered my assistance." Then he determined to tell her all if she would let him, and, casting a furtive glance at the sweet, wondering girl looking upon him with those startled eyes, he said, kindly :

"Adele, I've never been anything but your friend. Will you not tell your daughter who I am, and let me talk to you?"

"Yes, you were always my friend, so far as I know." Then, with a deep crimson blush, which always o'er-spread her features at the mention of her husband, she said :

"Isabel, this is your father's brother. Come and greet him, dear."

Isabel advanced at once, gave him her hand, and startled them both by saying : "I remember so well seeing you when we visited the Villa Careggi. I recognized you immediately in the church."

He still held her hand, and, with a modesty most painful, said, in reply : "My dear, I am glad you deemed me worthy a second thought. Why did you remember me among all those visitors?"

"Oh, I really don't notice the resemblance now; but at first you made me think of a young girl I met last summer in Lucca. Don't you remember, mamma, that I took such a fancy to a little American girl the day we

went up into the Guanigi Tower?" she asked, as she resumed her seat.

"Yes, my dear, I remember."

"Adele," Charles began, "will you let me talk to you before I go away? I have much to say—not from *them*—it is on my own account."

"Not to-day—no, not to-day. Give me time to think. I did not dream that I should stand face to face with one of you again. It is very sudden."

"Yes, it is sudden. I will give you time to compose yourself; only don't refuse to see me. Set an hour for me."

She stood with downcast eyes a moment, and, raising her head proudly, she said: "I will not be weak. You may come to-morrow at four o'clock."

He replied with gratitude, and moved toward the door.

Isabel sprang up and said, pleasantly: "I will show him out, mamma." The door had no sooner closed behind Isabel and Charlie than the former said, with her great black eyes resting solemnly upon his face: "Uncle Charlie—I may call you that? Won't you tell me about my papa—how he looks? Does he look like you?"

"Oh, no, Isabel. Your father is called a strikingly handsome man."

"And is he *good*?" she asked, earnestly.

"Good? He—he is very good."

"Tell me more of him. Oh, if you only knew how I want to see him, and know him! Think of it, Uncle Charlie; I am nearly sixteen years old, and have a father, yet I have never seen him. Is it not hard?"

"Yes, Isabel, it is very hard; but not as hard for

you as for him," Charles replied, sadly, and the sadness was reflected in his voice.

"Does he care? Would he like to see us?" she cried, eagerly.

"He is miserably unhappy; but he does not know that he has a daughter who would be precious to him. He would be doubly miserable if he knew."

"Then why does he not come to us?"

"My dear, you must forgive my abruptness. I cannot answer any more of your innocent questions until your mother gives me permission. Then you shall hear all you like."

She looked painfully disappointed, but answered: "You are right; though I am sure mamma would not care, for she has tried so often to tell me about him, but she always is sick from grief afterward, and grandpa worries so, too, then that I do not ask her any more. I don't see why he keeps us away so long, or why he don't come to us. I am sure if he knew how dearly mamma loves him he would come. I hope I shall love papa as well as I do you."

Charles spoke of commonplace matters until the gloom had left her face, then he bade her adieu, promising to return on the following day; and he left in the doorway a young girl who had said: "I hope I shall love papa as well as I do you." And these words rang in his ears long after he went to bed that night.

When Isabel returned to the room they had left she found her mother standing beside the narrow window, peering dreamily through the twilight shadows. Adele did not, for some minutes, perceive her daughter's return, although the latter could have touched her mother's arm, so near she stood.

The mother turned with a gesture of longing or impatience, or perhaps despair. Isabel could not define it, although she had observed it many times before, and she remembered that it always followed these fits of abstraction, when her mother seemed devoured by some hungry phantom of the past. Adele had suffered many ills since she left her American home; sickness and financial loss, and many other distressing failures, had seemed to follow each other in quick succession, but she bore them with commendable fortitude. They all paled in misery beside this one great grief--the grief of her life.

As she left the window with her indefinable gesture, Isabel overheard her say: "*Oh, if I only knew.*"

Isabel instantly sprang to her side.

"Mamma, tell me what is it? Am I not old enough to know? Have I not waited long enough to know the secret of your life? Tell me, mamma. I implore you, tell me why we are here, while my father lives in another country. Surely, mamma, I am old enough to know."

Adele looked at her stupidly. Was the child going mad, or had something really fired her curiosity to this pitch?

Adele clasped her hands around her daughter's arm, and they walked together to the little old-fashioned lounge, which decorated or disfigured one side of the room, as one's taste must decide. The mother sat down, the daughter slid to the floor and laid her head against her mother's knee.

Every vestige of color left Adele's face; but, with a determination which we have not perceived in her before, she began: "Daughter, I understand the intense

interest this visit from Charles Hayne has produced ; indeed, I feel it keenly myself, and I would explain it all away if I could. But there are things in one's life that even a mother may not tell her child."

"But, mamma, papa was devoted to you, and good—"

"Heaven help me—yes."

"And this man—oh, mamma, I like him. I am sure he is good and true ! Mamma, did my father look like his brother ?" Isabel asked, eagerly.

"No, my love," the white lips answered. "Your father was handsome. Oh, *so* handsome and so kind." And a sob followed the words.

"Uncle Charles said papa is good—"

"What has he been telling you ? What right had he to fill your mind with hopeless fancies ?" Adele cried, nervously.

"Mamma," Isabel cried, "don't compel me to defend him against you. I asked him questions, and he told me he could not answer them without your permission ; but—"

"Yes, I knew Charlie was too honorable. I spoke hastily."

"He said that papa is miserable without you ; but that he does not know that he has—me. Just think of the horror of that, mamma. I am nearly sixteen years old, yet I have never seen my father, and he does not know even of my existence ! Mamma can you blame me ? There is a shadow over our lives ; tell me what it is. You are being punished ; and for what ? You, who are so good and true. Why has God sent this great grief to you, who have never sinned ?"

"We cannot tell ! God knows best," Adele replied, evasively.

"But, mamma, tell me—it is no fault of yours?"

"Yes," Adele replied; "I disobeyed my father."

"Disobeyed your father? Disobeyed grandpa, whom you lavish all your mind and time and love upon? I cannot realize that you should have occasion to disobey him, he is so loving and indulgent."

"Isabel, do not ask me any more now," Adele began, faintly, "I cannot talk of it calmly, dear; it tears my heart to pieces. I *cannot* talk of it yet." She had covered her face with her hands, and now she dropped them into her lap, and met the mournful, disappointed gaze of Isabel. Throwing her arms about her daughter's neck, she cried: "Oh, Isabel! I could smile upon you in your coffin if death were releasing you from a life like mine."

"Don't let it agitate you, mamma; I am sure I shall know it some day. I can wait, love." And Isabel kissed the white hands, and arose and kissed her mother's pallid face.

"Daughter, your forbearance surpasses my own. Listen, love. To-morrow I shall hear all that your uncle has to say. I am sure I can discriminate between the truth of his assertions, the false suppositions. Charles Hayne is honest; he is superior to anything dishonorable, and I can trust. But he does not understand. He has heard *their* side of the story; I am determined he shall hear mine. Then we shall have an opportunity of comparing notes."

"I am delighted, mamma, to see this determination in your manner. After you have seen him will you tell me—*please*, mamma, will you?" persisted the beautiful child.

"No, I could not, to save my life; I could not tell it, but, *he* may—your uncle."

Isabel clasped her arms lovingly about her mother's neck, crying, joyously :

"Oh, you dear, *dear* little mother ! Oh—see ! I have awakened grandpa." Darting to his side, she cried : "Do you feel better, grandpa ?"

Turning his face toward the figure kneeling at his side, Frederic Moore said, feebly :

"Yes, dear child ; or at least I *did* feel better before I awoke. I had such a strange dream," he added, wearily.

"It must have been a beautiful dream, grandpa, for you said you felt better before you awoke. Won't you tell it to us ?"

Ignoring her query, he asked :

"Where is your mother, dear ?"

"Here I am, father. Will you not take another spoonful of this mixture ?" Adele asked, anxiously.

He assented ; and when he had partaken of the stimulant, said :

"Ah, that warms me up and gives me life ! Old people are cold-blooded—cold-blooded—I apply that *literally* to myself, Adele."

"Oh, no, father ! This *is* a disagreeable place for invalids, especially rheumatic ones. It seems so damp and almost savors of mould," Adele answered, attempting to dispel his erroneous impressions of self this morning.

"Oh, Adele !" he cried, weakly, "*I* brought this exile, these gray locks, and these mournful eyes to you ; but for me——"

Adele laid a white hand upon his mouth, and though a flush mantled her brow and cheek, she said, calmly :

"Now, father, you are in one of your self-reproving

moods again ; you promised me you would try to overcome them."

" I did try. I think, Adele, that old people cannot escape the scourges of past folly ; it is lamentably true that, ' As we sow, so shall we also reap,'" he exclaimed, with a sigh.

" Oh, of course that is true ; but why have you awakened from this long, quiet sleep, infused with self-reproach ? "

" I had such a peculiar dream ; you know how strongly I detest anything savoring of superstition ? " They nodded assent. " Well, something has produced strange visitants to my imagination of late, and my last mad fancy was that we were at home again, and that *he* was pleading for you ; I would not listen, I would not hear. On my left stood a beautiful woman clothed in green and yellow. Her face was beautiful, but wicked. I thought she was the Queen—Hate. On my right stood a woman clothed in pure, spotless white. Her face was angelic in its loveliness. She was the Goddess Justice. She besought me, and conjured me to listen to his plea, and promised me all the sweets of life if I would give him back his—loss ; I was about to yield when Hate, revealing her white teeth by an enticing smile, showed me the humiliation, the wounded pride, the shame and disgrace my relenting would occasion. I should be steeped in mortification at my ignominious defeat. I had at last given way to the queen, and banished Justice from my presence, when, suddenly, the earth opened and I was carried down through the blackest channel. It seemed to me I groped for hours and grappled in the dark. When, suddenly, I came into a place—oh, I cannot describe

its horrors!" He covered his face with his hand, and murmured "horrible, *horrible*. When I was admitted, half-thrust, half-dragged in, and my eyes had become accustomed to the fierce, glaring light, the numerous fires emitted, I saw before me a vat of seething, boiling liquid. On one side stood the Queen, and on the other the Goddess; but they had assumed different personalities, and were now *two men*. I will not name them—we know them, however. Justice held *your child* at arm's length over that boiling curse, and Hate reached out his hand for *me* to be suspended likewise, and a man at the gate informed me that at the sound of a gong I should decide between right and wrong. I looked at Justice, he said: 'Will you save Isabel?' Then I looked at Hate. He merely pointed toward the boiling vat. I followed with my eyes, and the lashing liquid was boiling letters, and the lettered waves spelled defeat. Before I had time to reconsider the gong sounded, and *I chose Hate*. One moment more and I saw Isabel writhing—O God, it was only a dream, but it is my just deserts!"

He covered his face and moaned, as though in pain.

Adele tried to soothe him; Isabel begged to reassure him that she was only writhing at his unhappiness, but he answered none of their pleas; and when they drew his hands from his face, they thought for a moment he must be dead, so still and white he seemed; but closer examination showed them that he had only fainted.

Isabel rushed out of the room for help; and flinging open the street-door to send for assistance, she encountered Charles Hayne passing along the street. With a gesture of pleasant surprise, speedily followed

by a look of consternation at her unaffected alarm, he asked, anxiously :

“ Has anything happened, Isabel ; is your mother ill ? ”

“ No, Uncle Charlie ; it is grandpa. Do come and see him.”

She had no need to ask, for he was already bounding up the stairs. He waited, however, for Isabel to bid him open the door, and then together they passed to the inner chamber where Frederic Moore lay, oblivious of the tearful attention and restoratives that Adele dexterously administered.

There was no time for exclamations of surprise. Adele was only too happy to find her brother-in-law at her side, ready to assist in restoring her father, to wonder how he happened there so soon. They attended him during the entire night. It was long past midnight when he opened his eyes and desired to know what had happened to him. They told him he had been overcome with the exertion of talking, and assured him if he would let his mind rest as well as his body, he would, in a couple of days, be able to be about, and, perhaps, to resume their journey.

The worst being over, there was nothing to do but for Charlie to go ; but this Mr. Moore would not hear ; he had taken a strong fancy to “ the loyal American,” who, he averred, had saved his life. So with not a little embarrassment, a peculiar sensation of dread at the long silence which he felt assured would ensue (as he knew that Adele would say nothing to him in the presence of her father and Isabel), he sat down in the deep recess of one of the windows. What then was his delight to find Frederic Moore in a calm slumber, and Isabel taking her

departure for the rest of the night. He could not hope that Adele would retract one iota from her terms of the previous day; he should surely have to wait until four o'clock in the afternoon of the day that was then dawning. This *tête-à-tête* with Adele was to him full of terrors. To sit through tedious hours of dawn face to face with a woman whose secret he possessed, whom he had every reason to believe to have been a dupe to the flimsy devices of their mutual brother—and yet dare not offer the little consolation he might, because she had expressed her desire that he should wait until the morrow.

After an interval of silence following Isabel's departure, Adele, growing desperate in this disquietude and suspense, broke the stillness, much to the relief of both, by moving reluctantly near her companion, and saying, in a low, constrained voice, "Charles, I told you not to speak to me—of home—until this afternoon. I have had time to reflect, and, if you have anything to say which may interest me, you may say it." The effort was so painful; it cost her so much to say these words, that she could scarcely control the voice that threatened every minute to break into a scream. Charlie moved nearer, and said, softly :

"Adele, I am so brusque in my speech and manner, I wish I could command the tenderest words, to tell you what has been in my mind for months."

"Go on. I know what your manner implies," she added briefly. Then she put up her hand, apparently to shade her eyes, but in reality to hide the traces of pain which she was sure he would inflict by speaking of a past, full of dead dreams.

"I must first tell you, Adele, that they did not send

me. No one knows the object of my journey but mother, and poor Dick Turner."

"*He* does not know?" she whispered.

"No; he does not know. Adele, that would never have happened if I had been there."

"You are good and kind, Charlie, but do you control your brother's *affections*?" she said scornfully.

"My brother's affections were such *then* that I should not have wished to interfere. I wish I had power to control them now; I should make him forget the past, and be happy again; but that can never be. He will always be miserable, Adele, unless you return to him. He is so unhappy, *so*—"

"Which does he grieve for *most*, the girl who died, or me?"

"*Adele!*" Was all that Charlie could say.

"Ah, Charlie! I have perfect faith in you; but you have heard *their* story, now you shall hear mine."

"But, Adele, you can't believe Loll guilty of such a deception?"

"I do, though. Ah, it hurt, Charlie—it hurt. God alone knows *how* it hurt me." She stopped to choke back the sobs; and he allowed her to continue, uninterrupted. "But I think, Charlie, if he had been honest, and when the girl died, if he had come and told me that he was going away, or even sent me the briefest note to say so, I should not have felt so grieved. But he had acted so strangely, so indifferently, toward me for a day or two previous to this, that I was, or should have been, half-distracted with fear and pain had I not had such faith in him. Charlie, think what a contrast! For two years I had been his wife, only two years, and he had never left the house without a gentle

word and tender good-bye. *That* morning he did not even touch my hand in farewell ; that alone made me sick—utterly sick with suspense. Then imagine my distress at learning that he had actually gone to Mobile for a two weeks' sojourn, without ever sending me a line ! Oh, you think me foolishly passionate ; you think I ought to have stifled my pain, and shame, and met him before I came away. I could not have lived. My father offered me that permission ; he asked me to remain and see him ; but you know how I loved him, how I worshipped him ? I should have died at his feet if my eyes had rested on his face, while I knew he was not mine alone." Shivering and moaning she sank back upon the seat, from which she had risen during her vehement recital.

"Who told you he went to Mobile?"

"Dick Turner." Charlie looked piercingly into her face.

"Did Dick tell you that ?"

"He brought the message from Lawrence."

"But did he deliver it to you ?"

"No ! he told Philip first, and then Philip told me."

Charlie leaned back in his seat and watched her narrowly as she bit her lip and worked her hands nervously. Suddenly he threw his head back, and asked :

"Did you never hear what happened to Loll that morning after he left you ?"

"Happened ? No," she replied, curiously.

"Do you know how far he got ? How far the Mobile he was so anxious to reach, was from Woodside ?"

"No," she answered, curtly.

"May I tell you their side of the story, Della ?"

“ Yes, you may tell it.”

“ I will tell it as it was told me by three parties ; and they were all so similar that I can tell it in my own way without deviating from either the one or the other.”

He reflected one moment as to the best method of telling it, but the result was, he realized that he had but *one way* of telling anything, and that was briefly and to the point.

“ When Lawrence drove away from the house that morning,” he said, “ he, without any intention of going anywhere else, drove straight to mother’s. After spending some time there, he drove off for the office ; but had only gone a little distance from the gate when the horse that Jones drove to his wagon came dashing down the road, dragging two wheels of the vehicle. Nobody knows what happened nor how the collision occurred, but when mother and Cronie got to Lawrence, he was lying in the ditch, half dead. They took him to mother’s, and then they decided to tell you he had gone away until the worst was over, for they dreaded the effect of the shock it would, of course, give you. The morning after you left, Adele, they drove over to Woodside to bring you to Lawrence—but you were gone. And while you bemoaned your husband’s infidelity, he was lying two miles from you with a broken leg, crushed ribs, and a gash on his brow that rendered him senseless to everything for three days, and—”

“ He had *not gone* ? My heaven ! ” She slid from the chair to the floor, and buried her face in her hands, but did not even moan. Charlie, thinking she had fainted, ran wildly around the room, crying : “ Merci-

ful heaven, I told it too suddenly. I knew I'd make a failure."

Snatching up a bottle of *sal volatile*, he attempted to draw her hands away from her face ; the touch aroused her ; she threw herself at his feet and besought him to tell her all, adding : "O, Charlie, can you imagine how sweet it is to me to know that he had not gone away—that he had not left me ? Tell me all ; did he grieve for me ? Does he love me yet ?"

Yet while he told her of the disappointment, the heartache, the silver hair, and the face lined with care-furrows, her face assumed, instead of the eager light, a pallid hue of suffering and pain, and the moment he had finished she cried, despairingly :

"But the child, Charlie—I have *proof* that the child——" and she fainted dead away. The moment of happiness, followed by the ghost of sorrow, was more than she could bear.

CHAPTER XVI.

EXPLANATIONS.

So draw up the papers, lawyer, and I'll go home to-night,
And read the agreement to her and see if it's all right ;
And then in the mornin' I'll sell to a tradin' man I know
And kiss the child that was left to us, and out in the world I'll go.

—Will M. Carleton.

CHARLES was obliged to summon Isabel ; her mother's unconsciousness was so obstinate that nothing he could devise produced the least improvement. When he informed her of her mother's condition she came immediately into the room, and he was amazed to find that she had not changed her gown even for a loose *negligé*.

Isabel, unlike the generality of girls took her mother's sudden indisposition very quietly, though she did not essay to check the tears that rolled down her face. She set about the task of restoring her in the most skillful fashion, all the time murmuring words of sympathy and affection, of which, however, Charlie caught but a few.

When daylight came and the city was beginning to show signs of activity, Adele opened her eyes and spoke quite coherently to her surprised attendants. - Charlie arose and went to her side.

"You are better, Adele, and will, perhaps, need me no more, so I will leave you; but I wouldn't assume too much responsibility for a while. I shall be near enough to come at a moment's notice, and will be glad to do all that I can for you."

"It was horribly silly in me; don't think that I am so weak as to faint at every surprise. I want to finish our conversation, and you have not heard my story yet."

"I don't want to hear it till you are stronger."

"Come at noon to-day; I shall be strong enough."

He passed out of the house, and Isabel sat beside her mother and bathed her face, and soothed her as tenderly as Adele had done to her child in infancy.

The sun was making rapid strides in his ascension when Frederic Moore awoke. He did not call for attendance, but Isabel heard the long sigh and yawn, and went softly to his door.

"Good-morning, grandpa. Shall I call Lorenzo to help you with your toilet?"

"Yes, my dear; I think I will try to get up this morning."

"O grandpa, don't do it ; it will surely make you worse."

He only smiled for an answer, and Isabel went to summon Lorenzo, the man who had assumed the duties of valet and attendant since their arrival. While he gratified the wants of the sick man, who found, after a great effort, that he would not be able to arise, Adele and Isabel were making fresh toilets in the adjoining chamber.

The morning passed away, and noon was fast approaching. Isabel had not asked one question regarding the cause of her mother's sudden illness, but had divined the knowledge that it resulted from her interview with Charles.

Adele reclined in a deep chair near a window, turning from which to her daughter, she said :

"Isabel, I see your uncle coming toward the house ; after you have spoken to him will you let me see him alone, dear ?"

"Certainly, mamma ; but I shall soon grow jealous of Uncle Charlie, if you continue to prefer his society to mine," Isabel replied, laughingly.

Adele had no time to answer, for a soft tap on the door brought the blood into her cheeks, and set her heart to throbbing wildly. Charles was pleased to find her so much improved, and after Isabel left the room, closing the door between the sick chamber and the *boudoir*, where they were obliged to receive their guest, she went into her own little room, and opened the door leading into her grandfather's room, so that she might hear him if he called.

When Adele and Charles were once more alone, the former said, hesitatingly :

"Charlie, did they tell you *why* I left them?"

"Loll told me he believed the child had something to do with it, as he could imagine no other reason under the sun *why* you left."

"He did not deny the fact of there being a child?"

"Deny it? Certainly not. Why they adopted her."

"*Adopted her—that child?*"

"Yes; what else should they do with her? Send her to the poorhouse? I tell you, Adele, the child, whoever she was, belonged to a good family; and Lawrence promised the dying mother that he would find the baby a home among well-bred people. She was perfectly frantic at the thought of leaving her child among the class of people that she died among."

"And you believe, Charlie, that what they told you is true?"

"My dear Della, what object could Loll have in telling *me* a falsehood regarding the affair?"

"I can think of none; but, Charlie, you may be sure I should never have left my husband, had I not proof sufficient to convince me of his guilt."

"What proof had you?" he asked, waxing impatient.

"I have a telegram announcing that he had sent this woman a money order, and that he would meet her Thursday. Then I had the child's picture, *with its name* written on the margin, and a paper containing an announcement of its birth. My father, to make sure that these things were true, went to the inn and inquired into the circumstances, and," she whispered, passionately and hoarsely, "*they swore that the dying woman said that was Lawrence's child!*"

"Della, I don't doubt your truthfulness, but I do doubt your father's sagacity in this instance. Lawrence

said the woman did say that the child was his *to do with as he thought best*. Don't you know, Della, that these poor ignorant people hate us because we are what they choose to call the 'gentry?' They enjoyed that incident, they enjoyed the jealousy that prompted you to leave Lawrence, and for weeks he was subjected to the most cruel taunts and slurs, which he was powerless to resent because he was too honorable to fight, and the truth is the truth. Your father showed himself a hero, Adele, when he threw away his anger at you and espoused your cause, but he made a most humiliating mistake when he interfered secretly; he subjected you all to the severest censure and ridicule when he carried you off in that underhand fashion, and made you the subject of all that scandal."

"How could I have borne it, Charlie—the disgrace? If they thought I was not strong enough to bear the shock of the accident, how did they presume I should endure the thought of his faithlessness? They knew I must learn it some time."

He did not answer her. He asked, instead: "Have you the picture and papers you spoke of?"

Her face clouded: "Yes," she replied. "I will show them to you. Perhaps my desertion will not seem so groundless to you then." She arose in a dignified manner, and, turning to a small, portable *escritoire* drew a key from her pocket and turned it in the lock. Drawing forth a photograph, and handing it to him, said, defiantly: "Whose eyes are those, and whose name?"

His face flushed when he read the name, then turned a livid hue, as he threw his hand to his head and cried: "My baby! Oh, Clara, Clara!" And his head fell

forward on his arms that dropped on the window-sill. He was shaken with sobs. He heeded not Adele's presence; he cared not for eyes nor ears. He was weeping the first tears that had scalded his cheeks since he had grown to manhood. He was holding in his hand a picture of the baby that had, years ago, cooed his name and kissed his face; whose chubby hands had pulled his hair in playful glee. He was weeping for the girl who had abandoned him because his parents were *country people*. Adele had never seen grief like that! Involuntarily, the question arose in her mind: "Did Lawrence regret *her* so?" and, woman-like, wondered how Clara could have left a love like this! She would not witness his grief; she would go away and leave him alone with his sorrow. She turned to leave the room and encountered her father, in dressing-gown and slippers, standing white with terror, staring at the man before him. She laid her hand upon his lips and beckoned him away.

When they reached the inner chamber, and Adele had softly closed the door, she whispered to her father:

"How much did you hear?"

"I heard it all."

"All? Father, have you been there long?"

"No. The door was closed; but you forgot that window between the rooms, and I lay here until I thought I should go mad. I knew his voice was that of the American gentleman, and it did not take me long to recognize him. I went into the room just as you handed him that picture."

The moments that followed this conversation were moments fraught with painful sympathy for the man whose past had been thrown before her eyes in this un-

happy fashion, and, mingled with that, was the misery remorse inflicted. What turbulence and sorrow had their rashness occasioned! Yet it was such as could not be undone. The page containing this sad history could not be turned back and rewritten. They must go on—on—read the book through. But they could atone, in a measure, for their misguided work; but whether or not they *would* remains for them to tell.

Adele implored her father to lie down and rest after this exciting scene. He answered her almost harshly:

“Rest, child? I shall know no rest until I learn the whole of this thing. For months I have been haunted by a desire to hear from home—to know what changes had occurred in all these years. I am consumed with a desire to go back and die there. I can’t die at peace without once more looking upon the home place, and your whitening hair, Della, is a scourge, a sword, pricking and lashing me. Your baby stands here almost a woman, yet she does not know her father; should she meet him to-day she would not know him. I am getting old so fast—*so fast*—and I can’t die here. Do you know why I stay away? why I roam restlessly hither and thither, too ill to paint? Yet my illness is only remorseful regret. Why don’t I go back? Because the abominable pride and headstrong habits that grieved your mother to death are chaining me here. How can I face them all after all these years? How can I go back and *feel* their unspoken triumph. Frederic Moore, the purse-proud aristocrat, has had to succumb—to give up and acknowledge himself defeated. O, Della, I did it all; yet I am powerless to atone for——” He broke down, utterly exhausted. Adele, not daring to say a word lest his pride should, as usual, rebel, sat

perfectly rigid on the side of the bed. Her white hands locked and unlocked restlessly. He looked up : "Adele, why don't you chide me?"

"Father, we have both acted unwisely. But tell me one thing : Did you know, when we left home, that Lawrence was so near?"

"No, no! Before heaven, Della, I thought him miles away."

"Then I have nothing to chide you for. You have been all that an indulgent father could be. My child and I have never wanted for anything that *you* could give us, and you brought me away from shame, or what we thought meant shame. You did it for my good."

"Yes, and to gratify my vengeance, too. I thought it would taste so sweet to make your husband feel what I felt when he took you away from me. O, Adele, you have your mother's sweet, trusting nature. I was cruel to her ; yet she never gave me anything but kindness, and I adored her at first. So long as she was a defiant, tantalizing girl, I adored her ; but after I married her she was afraid of me, and it made me tyrannical. I could not help it. I never realized what a treasure I possessed until, with her last gasping breath, she turned her eyes, so full of reproach and entreaty, upon me, and asked me to be good to our baby. And this is how I have kept my promise! This is how I have treated her child!" he cried, vehemently, stroking Adele's gray hair.

"Father, he is walking about the room. I must go to him. Calm yourself, and lie down. You must not exert yourself so. I will go and talk to him. Think of the poor boy's grief."

Her father threw himself upon the bed with a deep sigh, and Adele went into the *boudoir* and found Charles walking restlessly to and fro. He looked like a different man. He might have been ten years older. His face was swollen and haggard, and perfectly livid ; his eyes were bloodshot and sunken, and it would seem that a whole night of weeping could scarcely produce a greater change than this one hour had done. He came forward and grasped her hands, and said, gently : "Can you forgive me my weakness ?"

"How can you ask, Charles ? Could I ask for greater evidence of my own blindness than what you call your weakness ? O Charlie, what you must have suffered !"

"Della, I lost my wife years and years ago ; but the first hour in all that time that I forgot my grief was when I first conceived the idea of bringing Lawrence's wife back to him. Shall I tell you the story of my life, Adele ?"

"If it will not be too great a pain, I should like to hear it."

"When I went away from home I went direct to a resort in the Adirondacks. A few days after that I met Clara Holbrook, and was completely fascinated with her beauty, and before a fortnight had passed we were engaged. Her father was the most selfish man in the world, and when I asked for Clara he drove me away almost brutally ; he left me no hope nor chance to assure him that our family was as good as his. So Clara and I ran away and were married. We travelled from one place to another, and were, I think, supremely happy. I intended, day after day, to write home and tell the family of my marriage, but I knew they would

think it strange if I did not bring my bride home to them ; and the truth was, Della, my wife had the most high-flown notions, and I lingered away, hoping to subdue them some before taking her home, for I knew that if she happened to disdain anything, instead of ignoring it, she would make everyone around unhappy by throwing it up to us. I saw these things, but while they did not in the least diminish my affection for her I could not subject dear, good mother, to the petty annoyances that I knew Clara would occasion. So time passed along till little Florence came, and then, throwing all obstacles aside, in my parental pride, I told her we would go to Hayne Home and spend a few weeks. She was perfectly delighted with the idea, and asked me numberless questions about my family : to which my truthful answers seemed to satisfy her, until she asked me if 'Hayne Home' was my mother's summer home.

"I explained to her that it was a homestead embracing two or three residences, and that it was not only a summer-home but all the home my mother had, and that she lived there the year round." He stopped and ran his fingers through his hair, and sighed distressedly. "Poor little Clara ! it was not her fault ; it was the way her father had brought her up—these foolish notions ! At the idea of my mother not having a city home, and belonging to a 'circle' of blue bloods, she became perfectly hysterical, and declared that while she had breath she would never cross the threshold of my country-home ; and contended that I had deceived her, and that I was nothing but an old farmer, which fact I took no pains to deny, and, after a warm contention, we separated, and I never saw her afterward. I

did not seek to know where she went. I never should have followed her, but had she returned to me I should have taken her back only too gladly. Poor Clara! She never dreamed that Providence would cast her child at my brother's mercy, and that my mother would dress her for the grave. I presume she did not like the name of Hayne, so she called herself Holbrook, but had the goodness not to rob my child of its rightful name. We called our baby Florence Holbrook Hayne, she has it written here, 'Florence Hayne Holbrook.' Dear, impetuous little Clara!"

"Then you must have seen your own daughter last summer."

"No, Adele, I did not see her. She was travelling with the Russells, a family who occupied Phil's house, and was somewhere in this country at the time. Wouldn't it seem strange if that should have been my Florence, whom Isabel met in the tower at Lucca?"

"It would, indeed, seem strange." Adele had forgotten, in her unselfishness, that she had a trouble of her own. She was mindful, always, of the sufferings of others, and, finding that Charles suffered, too, she instantly forgot her own pain; but by-and-by it surged upon her in all its wofulness, and how it did sting! But the thought that Lawrence had been true, and that she had caused him to suffer, made her sick with regret. They had been silent for some minutes, when Adele said: "But, Charlie, who is this Lawrence that sent her the money?"

"I can think of no one but the family solicitor, whose name was George Lawrence. The top of this message is torn off, so that I couldn't see where it was dated; but most likely she had started for Mobile: that's where he lives."

"What shall we do, Charlie? I could give my life to repair the wrong I have done, but my duty will be a divided one. I shall not leave father, and I am afraid he will not consent to return."

"Adele, if Lawrence had done you this wrong, nothing would daunt him until he had tried to atone for it. Will you not return to him, Della?"

"Do you believe he would forgive father?"

"Who, Lawrence? Can you doubt it? But would your father forgive him?" he whispered.

"I think he would. My father is anxious to return home, but whether or not he would desire us united, I cannot tell; so I shall abide by the decision of the two; if father will forgive, and soothe his animosity toward Lawrence, I will return; and then if Lawrence will do the same by father I will go back to him. That is only fair. Was ever fate so sad as mine?"

CHAPTER XVII.

FATHER AND DAUGHTER.

There was light in my eye when I saw the green woof
Of old elm trees half screening the turreted roof;
I grew strong as I passed o'er the daisy-girt track,
And the Newfoundland sentinel welcomed me back.
But the pulse of my joy was most warmly sincere
When I met the old faces familiar and dear.

—*Eliza Cook.*

At home there were several changes perceptible. After Dick died perhaps Aunt Prue grew more taciturn, but her heart was just as capable of generous impulses

as ever. She lived her quiet life with John, rarely ever leaving the house, excepting to make a charitable visit to the sick or the poor.

Lawrence had moved to the city, and had now an excellent practice ; his lot looked most favorable to a worldly eye. Good financial circumstances, a beautiful and accomplished daughter, and it appeared that nothing was amiss in the handsome home. But his life was empty, and nothing could fill the void that his loss occasioned. Florence was in her eighteenth year and would soon complete her collegiate course. Dayne had gone to a famous school to complete his education, and Walter Reynolds had entered upon his second year in a theological institution.

It was a night in June, and through the silver moonlight a figure walked rapidly from the village in the direction of Wicksburr. Reaching the gate, whose old, rusty latch flew open at his touch as though eager to express its glad surprise, he stood for a moment with his head resting upon his hand to quiet the tumultuous beating of his heart. Never had Charles Hayne experienced the wild throbings of hope, fear, joy, and sadness mingled together, as he did now, standing, as he thought, upon the selvedge of his fate. What should he say to her, this daughter whom he did not know ? How should he ever win her affection, after leaving her all these years to the mercy of his family who had been so good, so kind, and indulgent that he despaired of ever winning even her respect. If he could only find an entrance to the house where he might first look upon the face of his daughter, he felt that all would be easy.

At length he left the gate and strolled languidly over the gravelled walk shining white and cold in the moon-

light. He tapped softly on the door. John Warwick opened it and exclaimed, joyfully: "Bless the boy! Mother, here's Charlie," and never let go his clasp of the cold hand, until they reached the room where Mrs. Warwick sat. Such exchanges of surprise and gladness! Charles thought they would never end, and allow him to inquire after the child who was not theirs but his own.

"Are you alone this evening?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, son, we live alone now. Lawrence is practicing in the city, and Florence lives with him, and goes to school," his mother replied, little dreaming that his heart had fallen like a lump of lead in his bosom.

"Gone to the city? and you two are alone? It must be very lonely," Charles answered, and wondered what excuse he could invent to get away from the house to dispel his disappointment.

"We thought at first we could scarcely endure it, but we were anxious to give Florence every opportunity that was available, so we sent her to school. I don't think Lawrence could have been persuaded to go without her," John Warwick replied.

"He is still attached to her?" inquired Charlie, feverishly.

"Completely bound up in her. I often think it unjust—this fate of his," Mrs. Warwick exclaimed with a sigh.

"Mother, I told you I would not come back until I had spent my last cent or found Adele?"

"Yes, and, my son, I can almost read the result of your wanderings in your white, haggard face," she said, brokenly. With a forced smile he said:

"So you think I've come back penniless?"

"You have not accomplished the object of your journey."

"Oh, but I did, mother," he replied, drearily, and she leaned to him affrightedly, and asked :

"Then what is it? Something has happened, or you are ill."

"I found them safe and well. She has a daughter as beautiful as a houri, born before they sailed for Italy."

The gloom in his eyes frenzied her. She clasped his hands and said, tearfully : "But what was amiss? She would not come, perhaps."

Charlie got up and walked about the room. Never had he felt such unconquerable pain. Never had Mrs. Warwick experienced such torturing doubt since the day Adele abandoned her boy. At length Charles said :

"Mother and father, you have never found to whom this child whom you have nourished belongs?"

"No!" they both answered, in amazement.

"I found her father, and he is going to claim her."

John Warwick sprang to his feet and cried :

"He shall not have her!"

Charles smiled grimly, and answered :

"Do you know the story the dying mother told you? Well, that was perfectly true; they had quarrelled because this sweet little wife had foolish fancies regarding social and fashionable life, and scorned the young husband, whom she called an old farmer; and I assure you, mother, the husband never knew till I went to Italy that his wife had died. He had always kept his solicitor advised of his whereabouts, so that, in case this beautiful, spoiled child-wife ever desired to be reunited, she would know how to find him. Mother," he said,

kneeling beside her, “that beautiful girl-wife, on whose grave you have planted purple passion-flowers, was *my wife*, and Florence is *my daughter* ;” and his head, covered with glossy black locks, streaked with gray, dropped upon his mother’s knee, and sobs that nearly broke his heart, shook the strong, manly frame. John Warwick left the room ; his wife bowed over her son, but uttered no sound. All her heart was poured out in a mother’s prayer for the boy who had suffered so long, so silently, and alone.

How she loved him as he knelt there. How, more than ever, she loved the child who had said she was the prettiest grandma she knew. She forgot Lawrence’s sorrow, the sorrow that had whitened her hair, and made her sad for all these years. She forgot that now. Surely her sympathy might justly wander from his grief a little while, when all these years this boy had suffered too, and though his grief was unspoken, may it not have been greater, housed up in his heart that threatened to break ?

When he no longer sobbed, and the outpouring of his grief had relieved him of some of his pent-up woe, he arose and walked to the window.

His mother followed him, and laid her hand upon his arm. He looked down into her face, all wet with tears, and his heart smote him. Tenderly he drew her to him, and in tones as soft as Lawrence’s, and far sweeter because they were rare, said : “Ah, mother, your boys have brought you nothing but sorrow !”

“Sorrow for *their* sorrow. I wish I could bear it for them.”

“Don’t grieve for us, mother. Our shoulders are broader than yours. It seems to me,” he said, dream-

ily, "that Loll's sorrow would have grown light, being borne by you."

She smiled so kindly that he wished, for once, he possessed the impetuousness of his brother, that he might tell her how dearly he loved her. But he could only lead her to a seat and sit down beside her.

"What would you like me to do first, Charlie?"

"Send for Florence. I cannot rest until I have seen her."

"Very well, my son. I will send for her in the morning. But stay, this is Friday; they will be down to-morrow morning, anyway. They nearly always spend Saturday here."

"Mother, in my selfishness I have forgotten to tell you about Adele. They are coming back home."

"To Lawrence?" she said, joyfully.

"Conditionally. She has succeeded in winning her father's forgiveness for Lawrence, and he is quite willing to live at peace with all of us: but Adele stolidly refuses to leave her father, if our family refuse to accept his efforts to undo the wrong his rashness caused."

"Bless me! Each and every one of us will be only too glad to accept his offer of friendship. Adele must possess an unusually strong influence if she has succeeded in weaning him from his prejudices."

"She has done it, and, mother, he is as agreeable as any old gentleman I ever met, and he treated me in the most hospitable manner. I will tell you all about my meeting, and subsequent relations with them, and then you must go to bed; you are pale and tired."

Notwithstanding his concern for his mother's welfare, it was long after midnight before they separated for the night.

As they went through the hall, Mrs. Warwick stopped and closed the parlor-door, glancing apprehensively at Charles as she did so. The reason was, that over the piano hung a large painting of Florence's mother, a copy of the miniature in the locket. His mother knew that picture would revive all his sorrow and loss, and he had endured enough for one night.

Charles did not sleep for hours ; he sat brooding over his strange fate, until his room seemed like a prison house. Opening his door, he softly stole, carrying his lamp, along the hall and down the stairway until he came to the parlor ; he would set his lamp in there, and take a stroll in the garden. He threw the door of the richly-furnished parlor back, and, crossing to a table, set the lamp down, and turned once more to the door. His eyes strayed to the picture and remained fixed upon it, until it seemed to him the lips must have moved, they must surely have murmured his name. The beautiful, passionate face that had nestled so near his own, whose color grew deeper at his approach, and the full, crimson lips that had died, begging "Chad to forgive," all came back and stood before him. How long he stood there he did not know ; it must have been hours, for when he recovered from the dream the picture had brought back to him, he was leaning against the piano, and his whole being, it seemed, had been wrapt in slumber. His eyes burned, and his limbs trembled beneath his weight. He staggered blindly to his room, and threw himself upon the bed. Almost immediately he fell into a hard, dreamless sleep.

It was late in the forenoon when he came downstairs. The family had all gone about their respective duties and inclinations. He sat down to his solitary breakfast, and

was informed by Jane, still in the service of the Warwicks, that his mother had been called away that morning, but would be at home before noon.

On the whole, he was glad of it. His head ached, and his mind was so unsettled, he felt he could not talk to her, and promising himself a quiet smoke in the garden, he passed through the hall to take another look at the picture. Outside the house, just a few feet from the porch, he saw a young girl culling flowers. She had on her arm a pretty wicker basket, half filled with roses and geraniums. On her head was a large, white sun-hat that shaded her face, but could not hide the willful curls that blew about her face in sweet confusion. She was singing softly to herself, and did not hear Charles' footsteps on the gravel until he stood so near he might have touched her hand. He did not speak to her; he was content to gaze upon this fair child who looked like him, yet did not. As though his very presence spoke to her, she turned and saw him. Her face lighted up in a bright smile; she extended her hand in a most cordial manner, and said :

"You are Uncle Charlie? I am Florence. Grandma told me you arrived last evening, and were not well. I was going to arrange these flowers to adorn your breakfast-table."

He stood looking at her, thinking it the saddest thing that ever happened for him to listen without comment to his own precious child calling him "Uncle Charlie."

She was comparing him, in her mind, with Lawrence. Never had she smiled at Lawrence when he did not smile in return. Yet his brother had not even a greeting for her. He was so very pale that she began to chide herself for her hasty opinion.

"You look ill, Uncle Charlie. The sun is too warm. You—"

"No, child, the sun does not affect me. There is no one here to entertain me this morning but you. Won't you come and talk to me?" he asked, gently.

"Indeed I will. I hope, though, you won't call me chatterer, like papa does. He says when I cease talking he always feels dizzy."

"I shall love to hear you talk. Did your—did my brother not come with you?"

"No. Papa will come down on the evening train. He will be so happy to see you. I was very sorry, Uncle Charlie, that I did not get to see you last summer. You ran away so soon. We are not going to let you off again."

"Are you perfectly happy here, Florence?"

"Ye—s. I am happy. You, of course, know how I happen to be here? I should be perfectly happy but for the uncertainty of my identity. You can't imagine what a terrible Sahara my mind seems when I try to imagine who I am," she said, gloomily.

"Should you wish to leave here in case you found your family?"

"No, I should not want to leave here. I love grandma better than anyone in the world; and then—" She stopped, and blushed crimson.

"And then—what?"

"Oh, nothing," she answered, lightly.

"That is a pretty locket you wear," Charlie remarked, feeling that he must take it from her neck and look upon the pictured face within.

"Yes; that is all I possess of my mother's treasures. Her picture—" She hesitated, knowing that beside

her mother's face was another, which she felt she could not explain.

"Is her picture inside? Pray, Florence, let me see it?"

She could not refuse. While her cheeks grew warm and her hands trembled, she unclasped the tiny chain and gave it to him.

He opened it, and looked first upon the boyish face that smiled back at him.

"Who is this?" he asked.

"Oh, that is cousin Dayne Warwick," she replied, nonchalantly.

"Oh!" was all he said; but he knew then her love was not all her own to give him when he should ask it.

"That is my mother. Was she not beautiful? Papa had this picture copied for my birthday. It hangs in the parlor. I think my mother's face was lovely. I have always regretted that my father's picture was not in here. I think, though, it must have been, because the lining of the locket looks so scratched, and, you see, this gold margin is dented. Well, that was done when I got the locket, so I am sure there must have been a picture here."

"May I lift Dayne's picture out?" he asked, with apparent indifference.

"Yes; but you won't find anything but a few scratches."

He paid no heed, but quietly lifted from its place the picture of Dayne, and examined minutely the inside of the locket. Taking his knife, he inserted the blade beneath the paper that looked so scratched, lifted it out, and, handing the locket to Florence, said:

"There is your father."

The picture was not a miniature, as was Clara's. It was a photograph, unmounted, and he concluded that, in a moment of anger, Clara had thrust it out of sight by pressing it flat against the locket, and hiding it with the lining. Florence looked upon it spellbound ; first at the picture, then at Charles. After a lapse of some seconds, she said : "This looks precisely like a picture that grandma has of *you*." He almost sprang to his feet at this unexpected reception of the picture.

"*Me?*" he cried.

"Yes, *you*." And before he could detain her she had bounded from his side and across the lawn to the house, where she grasped the picture from the table, and, instead of going out again, she stopped at the window and compared the two pictures. Then, fairly panting in her excitement, she peered through the laces that draped the windows at the face of the man she had left sitting upon the garden seat. She looked at his face, then at the locket. Repeating this several times, she said to herself :

"Look at the similarity in the eyebrows. See how the hair grows high over the temples ; and the straight nose. Oh, *oh!*" she cried, rubbing her hands, "if that beard was only away so that I could see if this lovely mouth was there. And he acted so strangely, I thought his mind wandered. He knew all about this locket ; he asked me if I should want to leave here. Oh, God, grant my prayer, and let me see my father !" She could not go out in this excited manner. She stood tapping the floor with her pretty foot, and, after a few minutes, looked out of the window, but the seat was empty. Charles had gone. She was disappointed sorely, and, in her chagrin, turned petulantly toward

the door, and, there, like a phantom, stood the subject of the picture she held in her hand.

White to the lips, she said: "What did you hear?"

"I heard your prayer." And he was whiter than she.

"Then tell me. Are you my father?"

"I am your father." With a glad bound she leaped to the arms outstretched to receive her, crying, hysterically: "I knew it—I felt it. Oh, papa, papa!" and finished with a sob. He held her close clasped in his embrace. This girl, who an hour ago he had not seen, was standing with her arms about his neck, and her head pillow'd upon his bosom, where Clara's had lain, and now Clara's daughter was standing in her mother's place, and the mother's sweet, hazel eyes were looking down upon the twain from her burnished frame upon the wall. At last curiosity took possession of Florence, and she asked:

"Papa, why have you left me here so long? Why did you never come?"

"My love, it is such a long story that I should not have time to tell the half. But I only learned a month ago that you were my baby Florence, and I came with all possible dispatch to you, to claim you, dear."

"I shall be so happy, having found you, that I can wait to hear the story. There comes grandma. Let's go and tell her," she cried, joyously, attempting to drag him toward the door. But he felt that this hour was too sacred for even his mother to invade, so he said:

"Grandma knows it, dear."

"*Grandma knows it?* Oh, I'm so glad! No wonder she said this morning she hoped I would love Charlie as he deserved."

They sat down together upon a *fauteuil*, and, with clasped hands, exchanged thoughts and sentiments too sacred for the ears of a third party, and their conversation was sweetened by the presence of the picture—the picture of the young mother who died begging Chad to forgive her.

When noon came, and dinner was called, Charles walked proudly into the dining-room with Florence leaning upon his arm. Mrs. Warwick did not see them, and said to Jane: "Go and look through the garden. Florence has certainly not heard the bell."

"Oh, yes, she has grandma, but she has found her treasure."

"You have told her?" Mrs. Warwick asked Charles, tearfully, but with the sweetest smile.

"Partly; but, mother, she asked me first."

Congratulations from all, even Jane, followed, and then they sat down to a dinner which was appetizing enough, but no one seemed tempted to partake of it. Dinner was a farce, and so they repaired to the garden, and congregated in a shady nook, where Lawrence found them at four o'clock, when he came lounging gracefully across the garden, wondering who that tall fellow was who stood with his hand on Florence's shoulder.

Lawrence joined the party amid loud and happy welcomes. Florence went forward to meet him and kissed him warmly. Lawrence said, gaily, after the surprise of meeting Charles had exhausted itself:

"Floss, I had a notion to get just a little jealous when I saw this fellow with his hand on your shoulder. But we could not be jealous of your uncle, could we?" and playfully tapped her cheek with his cane.

Florence was, for once, speechless. She looked at

Charlie, and, as plainly as words could have done, her eyes besought him to undeceive her benefactor. Charles took the hint, and, turning to the trio and seating himself, said: "If you will grant us an hour I'd like to talk to Loll." And they went away, but not until Florence had left a kiss upon Lawrence's brow, and, passing to the back of Charles' seat, kissed the lips that turned to meet her own.

Lawrence said, playfully: "Here, minx, that is not fair. You kissed him on the lips." And, with an assumption of naturalness, she retorted: "Because he put up his mouth to be kissed, and you didn't." But her heart was full; yet it was not heavy. She seemed possessed of but the one idea—that Charlie was her father; and, dearly as she had loved Lawrence, she begrudged the minutes that kept her father from her side.

Charlie began with his departure from home in search of Adele. He told everything just as it happened, excepting that which related to Florence. He told him of the conditions upon which Adele had promised to return; about the girl, as beautiful as a picture, who hoped she would like her papa. He told him all; not without many interruptions, for, at first, it seemed that Lawrence could not hear it. The thought that someone had seen Adele, had held her hand, heard her voice, and now came to him to tell it, was enough to overpower him. It was long after the twilight shadows had gathered when they arose from their seat, and Lawrence turned to his brother with shaking voice and outstretched hands, and said:

"Charlie, I—" but Charlie understood and wanted no demonstration of gratitude; so, taking Lawrence's hands in his own, said brusquely:

"That'll do, Loll. I know what you would say. Go by yourself now and think."

"But one question more. You did not tell me what convinced my poor wife of my innocence. Tell me that, Charlie."

"I had not intended, Loll, to mix my personal affairs with your gladness, but since you ask I will answer. The child that calls calls *you* papa is *my child*, and the woman who died breathing a prayer for Chad's forgiveness, was my wife—my own proud little Clara." He brushed his eyes hastily, ashamed of the tears that glistened there, and, seeing that Lawrence was about to speak, said :

"There, Loll, you have had enough surprise for one night; go and nurse it," and he walked away in the gloaming, leaving the mystified Lawrence gazing incredulously after his retreating figure. Before it had vanished in the murky shadows, Lawrence ran breathlessly after his brother, calling :

"Charlie, for Heaven's sake come back and tell me of your own past. I am but the most selfish creature to accept my happiness, while you are sad. Come back and talk to me."

The smile that spread over Charlie's face was puzzling.

"Why, boy," he replied, "I am further away from sadness to-night than I have been for years. I have nursed the idea long that I had nothing to live for; now, I think, if Clara were with me, I would not exchange my lot for a king's."

"But come and tell me, Charlie. I shall be happier knowing your story, too."

Then they returned to the seat they had deserted,

and Charles told his life-story to Lawrence, which brought back the day of Clara's death, and recalled the unhappy past so forcibly that he wondered how the days and years since that unhappy time had dragged themselves away without consuming them bodily.

It was late in the night when the twin brothers retraced their steps to the house, and found Florence awaiting their return. She had gone to her room but could not erase the desire to see her father again and whisper her good-night to him.

Lawrence clasped her in his arms and told her how great was his joy at finding her father. They expressed their gratitude to Heaven for the intercession of Providence in throwing the dying mother among her husband's kindred; and, with manifold expressions of thankfulness, they separated for the night. There was a look of intense sorrow in Lawrence's face when Florence said, half sadly :

“What shall I call you? I can't have two papas.”

“You will have to adopt me for your uncle, since you are blessed with a genuine father,” and, clapping his hand on Charles' shoulder, continued : “Charlie, old boy, I can't believe yet.” He left them, and, going to his room, threw himself down upon a chair near the window and cried aloud in his great joy :

“Coming back to me, my angel wife, coming back to heal the wound in my heart, to make me glad with your love, to sweeten my bread with your presence, to brighten my home, to share my life, to be everything that man can want? O Adele, my love, my love!”

His voice died away in a murmur of joy, and the stars came out, and looked fondly down; the moon arose and bathed his face in a sheen of moonlight sym-

pathy ; the frogs croaked their gladness ; the crickets sang songs of happiness ; the dew fell softly upon his face and hair, like cool, sweet hands laid tenderly on them ; the soft June wind roamed lazily through the trees, and stirred the leaves into sweetest music ; all nature came forth to wish him well, and amid it all he lay and poured out his heart in thankfulness and praise.

CHAPTER XVIII.

CORA'S DISAPPOINTMENT.

Yet, I think, I should be less severe.
Although so unexperienced in such things, I fear
I have learned that the heart cannot always repress,
Or account for the feelings which sway it.

—*Owen Meredith.*

ON a sultry July night a carriage dashed before the entrance of a large railway depot in L——, and Charles and Lawrence Hayne alighted and passed under the massive arch. The latter looked eager and expectant, despite his haggard and wan appearance. Excitement and pleasurable anticipation lent a flush to his cheeks, and his eyes sparkled as they had not done for years.

He passed restlessly to and fro over the cold tile floor, casting occasional glances at the clock, which seemed to move so slowly that he could not believe its tell-tale fingers until he had compared their progress with the elegant chronometer he drew from his pocket.

“ Dear, dear,” he exclaimed, “ how time does drag ; it seems that I have been pacing this floor for two hours, whereas that clock declares it is but fifteen minutes ! ”

"Train is due now; hope it won't be late," answered Charlie.

Shortly after this the crier came into the waiting-room bearing a light brown envelope in his hand. He stopped only a few feet away from the brothers, and in his cold, metallic voice cried out:

"Telegraph message for Dr. Lawrence Hayne."

Before the name had died away in echoes, Lawrence had possessed himself of the message, and was tearing the end off the envelope.

It was dated New York City, and ran:

"Adele too ill to travel. Meet Isabel to-night," signed Frederic Moore.

Turning to Charlie, Lawrence exclaimed:

"Have I not suffered enough?"

"Seems not, Loll; but Isabel is coming."

"Yes; but I almost wish the child were not coming. I shall not know what to do with her, or what to say to her."

Charlie could not repress a smile at this laconic answer, and remembering from experience how naturally one adapts himself to a position like this, replied:

"You will remark her beauty if nothing else. But here comes her train."

Two pairs of very expectant eyes peered through the gaslight into the faces of the passengers as they filed down the steps to the ground. Lawrence espied a young man alighting from the railway carriage whom he recognized as Walter Reynolds.

Bowing cordially, but hastily, Lawrence said:

"Glad to see you back, Walter," and pushed his way through the crowd.

Walter Reynolds stopped to assist a young lady to

alight, and the moment that Charles Hayne espied her he rushed forward, exclaiming :

“ Isabel ! Loll, here is Isabel.”

Such an astonished party was never seen before. Walter, not having the remotest idea who Isabel was, stood transfixed at seeing Lawrence place his arms about her and rain tears upon her hair, while she buried her face in his bosom and sobbed aloud. Charles Hayne regarded Walter dubiously, until the latter came forward and said :

“ I presume you are Mr. Charles Hayne ? I am a friend of Dayne Warwick, and a frequent visitor at Wicks-burr. My name is Reynolds.”

“ Ah, I am glad to meet you ; but how do you happen to know this young lady ? ” inquired Charlie.

“ I do not even know the lady’s name. I was seated in the car this afternoon and this lady entered with a colored servant ; there was not a section to be had at any price, so I offered her half of mine, which she accepted, and the servant went into the second-class carriage.”

Lawrence turned to Walter Reynolds, and said kindly :

“ Will anyone meet you to-night, Mr. Reynolds ? ”

“ No ; they are not expecting me, Mr. Hayne.”

“ Then my brother will drive you home, and I shall take the others home in my carriage.”

“ Pray put yourself to no inconvenience. I would much prefer to take a cab,” Walter replied.

“ No trouble at all, my boy, we have two carriages here ; the fact is we were expecting a large party to-night. Charlie,” he said, addressing his brother, “ you may explain the circumstances to Mr. Reynolds as you

go along," and, without once loosening his gentle grasp on Isabel's arm, he led her to the carriage.

The faithful old Nettie, who had followed them in all their wanderings abroad, in spite of her promise to Julia that she would come back and "lib hyar fer ebber an' ebber," walked patiently behind, showing all her big white teeth in her gladsome grin.

When they reached the carriage, Nettie mounted the box with the driver. Lawrence closed the carriage door, and was alone with his child, whom he had never before seen.

He sat beside her with her hand in his, and listened while she told him of her mother's sudden illness when they reached New York, and how they had insisted upon sending her ahead to break the disappointment, adding :

"I rather objected to coming on, papa, lest my coming without mamma should make me less welcome."

"My dear child, under no circumstances could I receive you more joyfully. They were right ; you have broken the disappointment. I cannot tell you how proud I shall be to call you my daughter," he said, with gratitude in his voice.

"I hope you will learn to love me, papa."

Learn to love her ! He could scarcely refrain from hugging her to his heart even now, because she was Adele's child.

"No danger but that I shall love you too much. Everything I love slips away from me. I loved your mother, and see what became of it ! I loved little Florence, and my brother comes and claims her ; now who will carry my beautiful daughter away ?" he asked gently.

"No one, papa, no one. I shall stay with you and mamma."

"Tell me, Isabel, why you did not advise me when you would sail for home? I wanted to meet you when you landed."

"Mamma would not consent to it; saying that the time would seem so long to you in anticipation."

"Dear little Adele! This is our home, Isabel. I would not allow any one to come and spoil this first evening. I wanted it all to myself, and now I fear you will be lonely."

"Oh, no, papa! I am rather glad to be alone with you."

They stepped from the carriage and ascended the broad, white stone steps that led to the entrance, and Isabel was conducted through a spacious and brilliantly illumined hall to a reception-room, where a venerable matron arose and was presented to her. She was Florence's companion and *chaperon*, Mrs. Wall. When Isabel had refreshed her toilette, dinner was served. Charles Hayne had returned ere that, and while they dined they discussed the proper mode of disposing of their time until Adele should arrive.

Lawrence could not eat. He sat idly playing with his fork and watching the pretty face opposite him. He at length declared his intention of going on to meet Adele and her father. He knew he could neither sleep nor eat until he had seen her, and he would leave to-morrow for the spot that held the dearest object in the world to him. But what should he do with Isabel meanwhile?

"If you do not object, papa, I think I should like to go to your mother's while you are gone. I saw

cousin Florence when she was in Italy—at least I have built my hopes on it having been Florence, and I am all curiosity to see her and make the acquaintance of your family."

"Then you shall go there, my dear, since you would be pleased. I am sure you will have a pleasant time."

"When do you leave for New York, papa?"

"To-morrow morning. I shall leave you in your uncle's care. He will take excellent care of you, too, and you and Florence will get on famously together."

So it was arranged that while Lawrence should absent himself with Adele, Isabel should make the acquaintance of her new-found relatives. The next morning, at nine o'clock, Lawrence bade his sweet daughter good-bye, and hastened away to catch the train, and an hour later Isabel was entering the drawing-room, with a perceptible tremor on her lips, that was caused by the name of Walter Reynolds upon the card she held in her hand. The remembrance of his kindly proffered attention and gallant service of yesterday, which had so brightened an otherwise tedious journey, brought the blood to her cheeks in little tingling waves. She entered the room shyly, and rested her sweet blue eyes upon his face a moment. He arose hastily, and crossed the room to meet her.

"Miss Hayne, my early visit is prompted by a desire to offer my congratulations and good wishes. I rejoice so sincerely in learning that my travelling acquaintance proves to belong to my dearest friends."

She thanked him so prettily, and seemed so shy in her truthful simplicity, that Walter forgot all else but this beautiful girl. They were overcoming their strangeness, and were talking in quite an animated manner,

when Charles Hayne entered the room, followed by Dayne Warwick.

When Dayne had been presented to Isabel, and he had warmly welcomed and assured her of his cousinly regard, he turned to Walter and expressed his pleasure at finding him at home. Walter informed him that he had arrived the previous evening to find his aunt's house, where he had resided for years, filled with guests, and, while they were all charming people, he saw but a faint outlook for a gay vacation.

Dayne exclaimed with animation: "I will tell you what we will do, Walter. I arrived in the city this morning and found that my parents are visiting in Mobile. I cannot spend such a solitary vacation, and shall not care to curtail their visit, so I propose we go down to Hayne Home and partake of Aunt Prue's good things, and enjoy a few days' hunting."

"That will be capital, boys," exclaimed Mr. Hayne. "I see no prospect of a dull visit there, hunting and fishing all day, and the young ladies to entertain you in the evening."

"Oh, indeed, Mr. Hayne, we did not forego the pleasure of the ladies' society until evening during our previous visits. We kept them with us, and Miss Florence learned to handle a rifle splendidly, under Dayne's tutelage," Walter added, mischievously, looking at Dayne's flushed face.

"Are there two young ladies' at Hayne Home?" Isabel asked.

"Yes, Miss Cora Russell is a particular friend of Florence's. The Russells occupy father's home, and are charming people," Dayne replied, and Isabel turned to Charles Hayne and exclaimed:

"Then, uncle Charlie, I am sure I saw cousin Florence in Italy, for the girls addressed each other as Code and Floss, and I am sure they called their *chaperon* Mrs. Russell."

This little speech elicited an explanation for the benefit of Dayne and Walter, and then followed mention of a few notable characteristics of the absent girls, in which the young men delightedly acquiesced, and exclaimed : "That was certainly Miss Florence," and "No one but Miss Cora would have thought of that," until they were all quite assured that the visitor to the Guanigi Tower, at Lucca, was none other than the rosy-cheeked, curly-haired Florence.

Isabel had not expected to go to the country until the following day, but their conversation had infused so much enthusiasm into her mind that she suddenly exclaimed : "Uncle Charlie, have you anything to detain you in town ?" with considerable wistfulness.

"Nothing at all," he replied, eagerly.

"Then why can we not go to the country to-night ?"

"Nothing would please me better," he said ; then turned to the boys and asked : "Why can't we all go down this afternoon together ?"

"Capital idea ! Cousin Isabel, can you be ready by one o'clock ?"

"Oh, dear, yes. Do we leave at that time ?" she asked.

"Yes ; and I think we boys will go home now and get our boxes ready. We will have scarcely time to call here on our way down. Uncle Charlie will bring you to the depot. I am so glad you are going down immediately. We will be quite a merry party, I am sure," Dayne said gayly.

It was in Walter's heart to express his gladness, too ; but from a feeling of conscious admiration, he refrained from expressing an opinion at all, but departed in a most gallant manner, for which Dayne unmercifully twitted him after they had reached the street, saying laughingly :

"My dear Reynolds, you astonish me ! Have your theological instructors done nothing but drill you in deportment ? You eclipse me, young man."

"Nothing like making a good impression. Your cousin is the most charming girl I know," Walter answered, gayly.

Dayne made no reply, which led Walter to ask :

"Don't you think so ?"

"There are exceptions. Though Cousin Isabel *is* charming."

"Dayne," Walter ventured, "what is the matter with Florence and yourself ? Nothing amiss, I hope ?"

"Nothing amiss ? No." But Dayne's voice was softer than it was wont to be, and he stared at the sidewalk in such a determined fashion that Walter pressed him still further.

"You are hopelessly in love with her, Warwick ; why don't you come to an understanding ?"

"I hope to this time. The fact is, Reynolds, since I have been away at school, and Florence has had different associations, she is not the same girl at all. She is variable in her moods ; sometimes she is all smiles and kindness ; again she is so spirited and defiant that I cannot understand her at all." And his words were accompanied by a long, deep sigh.

Walter did not understand matters of the heart at all, and imagined that were he anxious to open his heart to

a sweet creature, it would be the easiest thing in the world to do. They walked on in silence, not referring to the subject again. They were at the depot in ample time to catch the train leaving at 1 o'clock. When they arrived at the station two miles from Hayne Home, they found, in accordance with their telegram, requesting someone to meet Isabel, the carriage from Wicksburr, and the road cart in waiting for them. Florence had come to meet them, and no sooner had Isabel stepped from the railway carriage than Florence pressed eagerly forward to welcome her. Their greeting was so modest and unaffected—each one remembering the other—that it was beautiful to see them.

"You have changed so little since last summer, Cousin Isabel; I remember your face so well," Florence remarked.

"And your face has been like a picture to me ever since I saw it. I thought you must be a Spanish girl."

Florence turned to Walter and greeted him with more than usual cordiality, but her manner was constrained, and a trifle frigid, when she said :

"This is such a pleasant surprise, *Cousin* Dayne. We did not know you were expected home so soon."

He accepted chivalrously the little hand she offered, and replied :

"I hope none the less welcome, Cousin Florence."

But she turned to welcome her father, so that Dayne did not have an opportunity to note the lovely flush that mantled her cheek, the drooping lids that hid the bright, brown eyes. He felt piqued at her evident indifference toward him. He had loved her all his life, and could not realize that she, as a young lady, could not,

with propriety, make the overtures that she could years before when she was a little child. Then she met him clamorously welcoming him, with no hesitation at all, but natural maidenly modesty forbade that now, and while she essayed to conceal her delight at meeting him again, he turned away in chagrin and began conversing with Isabel.

Charles Hayne was the only member of the little group who seemed in his natural frame of mind ; yet he was far from happy, for he had learned, with not a little trepidation, that Philip and his wife had gone to Mobile the previous day, knowing perfectly well that Lawrence anticipated his wife's arrival at this time. Charles had hoped to witness the meeting between these two, as all his hopes of learning the mystery of Adele's sudden flight lay in Philip's manner when in the presence of Adele. But putting to flight all ideas of a dreary nature, he proposed starting at once for the homestead. He took Dayne in the cart with him, and Walter Reynolds accompanied the young ladies in the carriage. The drive was accomplished almost in silence ; only occasionally Florence ventured to make a passing observation to Isabel, who felt strange and shy among her new friends and strange surroundings.

The meeting between Mrs. Hayne and Lawrence's daughter was most touching. The old lady was completely overcome with emotion, and as for Isabel, all she asked for was to see her father's lovely mother alone for an hour, that she might pour out all her pent-up thoughts and fancies to this sweet-faced grandmother, whose white hand so softly stroked her fair hair, and whose voice seemed to fill the void in her heart her mother's absence made. While Isabel and Mrs. Hayne

were closeted together, Dayne and Walter walked over to see Aunt Prue, and Florence and her father walked over to apprise Cora Russell of their lovely acquisition, and invite her to spend the following day with them.

Cora's pretty face flushed with pleasure at the thought of so soon meeting the man who she earnestly believed loved her, and to whom she had given her undivided affection. She never dreamed of finding a rival in the sweet-faced girl whom she had a faint remembrance of having seen in Italy. Her foremost thought was for Walter, and how she should dress to appear to the best advantage. Walter liked pale blue, so she would wear a pale blue muslin dress and a white lace hat. She scarcely heard what Florence was talking with such volubility about, so engrossed was she with her own expectations. In after days, when disappointment had made her morose and gloomy, she looked back to that hour, and wished with all her heart that she might feel one iota of the happiness she felt then when she sat listening to Florence's happy sallies, yet hearing nothing for the glad music that filled her own heart.

The guests took their leave, urging her to call early, as, in case the day proved to be a fine one, they would take an excursion of some sort. There were many resources of pleasure at Hayne Home and its surrounding neighborhood, and the young people promised themselves fêtes and pleasurable excursions without number.

The following morning was bright and fair; but not fairer than the beautiful girl who entered the gate and tripped over the gravel walk that led up to the Warwick house.

Florence came bounding down the steps in simple

white muslin, crying, gayly: "Oh, Code, I am so glad you have come so early; we have about decided on a visit to the Haunted Hall, but I am afraid that pretty gown will not survive such an excursion. Why did you not wear a plainer one?"

"This one is plain enough," Cora answered, brightly.

"Yes; but it is too delicate for a visit among those old dusty walls. I can scarcely wait. I always did want to go down there," Florence observed.

"How is your cousin this morning? You chatter away so fast I have not had a chance to inquire."

"Quite well, and, oh, Cora, she is *perfect* in her manners—so refined. I am sure my impetuosity completely distracts her sometimes," she continued, with a little sigh. "I wish I were like her."

"Oh, Floss, she is doubtless charming; but you are, too, in your way. Pray do not wish to be like other people."

Cora was so perfectly well aware of the advantages of personal attraction she possessed over Florence, that she never failed to see and give due credit to all that her little friend merited. In this she was generous, but as yet only the pretty side of her nature had been exposed, and she was apparently the most fortunate of girls!

When, a few minutes later, she appeared at the door of the parlor, and saw Isabel seated at the piano with Walter bending over her, drinking in her beauty in utter oblivion of all else, Cora would have given worlds to have been anyone other than Cora Russell.

CHAPTER XIX.

REUNITED.

While the world was yet ours,
While its sun was upon us, its incense streamed to us,
And its myriad voices of joy seemed to woo us,
We strayed from each other, too far, it may be,
Nor, wantonly wandering, then did I see
How deep was my need of thee, dearest, how great
Was thy claim on my heart, and thy share in my fate !

—Owen Meredith.

LAWRENCE had once expressed a wish that he were haunted by Adele's caresses ! If he had wished that, what then must have been his anticipations as he drove from the depot to the hotel ? With this intense eagerness and anxiety beating in his heart, surging into his brain until it thrilled every pulse, every nerve and fibre of his being, he stopped before the entrance of the great hotel.

For the first time in his life he regretted the change in his personal appearance. He was not a vain man, but heretofore when his truthful mirrors had told him that his hair was no longer brown, and that his face was lined, he had turned away with a sigh, perhaps, and mentally concluded it did not matter, for Adele would never know ; but now, in this great tumult, his heart cried out against this devastation of time, and, with all his passion abused and tortured and rising clamorously in his bosom, he sent his card to her room.

Almost immediately Frederic Moore appeared, and

the two men, who had played at cross-purposes all these years, met and shook hands without a word, without a smile, or a sign of greeting save that warm clasp of hands that sealed their good-will. Lawrence was the first to break the embarrassing silence by saying, contritely :

“Mr. Moore, I hope I fully appreciate your magnanimity in thus giving me back what I have lost.”

“There are many things, Lawrence, which you and I will have to discuss before we will fully understand and appreciate each other ; but if you bear me no more resentment than I do you, we shall soon be friends.”

“Your nobility in knocking down barriers thus, makes me feel myself a perfect coward.”

“We will have ample time, I trust, to understand each other’s motives. Just now I see you are consumed with a desire to see Della ; I came hither to permit you to see her alone.”

“How can I thank you ?” Lawrence replied.

Mr. Moore led the way to their apartments, and, signifying with the slightest gesture that Lawrence might enter, closed the door and went away.

The boudoir Lawrence found himself in was so large, and the magnificent appointments were so gracefully arranged, that he found himself quite bewildered as to where he should turn to find her whom he sought.

A beautiful white hand pushed aside a portière and then emerged the most exquisite picture that Lawrence had ever dreamed of beholding.

He uttered not a word ; he could think of nothing to say in this hour of meeting that he had looked forward to all these weeks. He had expected to welcome her, but now she was here to welcome him.

At sight of the face, still handsome despite its lines, Adele lost all her self-command. She had schooled herself for this meeting, but now she was as weak as a little child.

With a low cry she threw herself upon his breast, and the one burden of her cry was "Forgive—forgive—forgive!"

"O Adele, my wife, my wife. Has the time come at last when I hold you again in my arms? I have thought that heaven had no mercy, and now I find more mercy than I deserve," he said, raining kisses upon the lovely face upturned to his.

"Than you deserve, Lawrence? Ah, my love, you deserve all the mercy—I the punishment. I cannot imagine how I doubted you, but you must know how strong the inducements were," she replied.

They sat down upon a sofa, and, clasping her arms around his neck, she sobbed out lament and self-censure, and pledged endless fidelity to him.

"Lawrence," she said, "I thought when I heard of your supposed faithlessness, that I had received my death blow; I did not believe that I could ever survive so great a grief. I thought it would be speedy and certain death, and I should have been so grateful for it. Yet you cannot appreciate the change in father, Lawrence, until you understand it; he has been so good to me, so patient and forbearing; indeed, I could not have borne my grief alone." She never moved her eyes from his face, and he, encircling her with his arm, listened to her voice enraptured. He yielded himself up to the sweet charm of the voice he had so longed to hear, and it seemed to him the finest strain of sweet music. Her eyes, with their soft lustre, charmed him,

and it was only when the glad tones ceased that he recovered from the spell she threw around him.

“Tell me, love, where did you go after you left me ?”

“Do you not know that we remained in L—— until after Isabel came ? Ah, me ! it is so many years, so long ago, and yet had it happened last week it could not be more plainly engraven upon my memory—the pain and grief I experienced when I beheld my child, and thought that she would never know her father. Then I prayed for death to release me from these cruel bonds. Oh, my love, my love, you cannot guess what I have suffered ; but, Lawrie, what pains, nay stings me most of all, is the thought that while you were true and trying to shield me from anxiety, I slipped away and caused you all this pain ; but, darling, I will atone for it—my whole life shall atone for it.”

“This one hour of joy atones for it all, my wife. I have suffered and suffered, but in my happiness now I could forget my sorrow, and this reunion repays me, love. I shall try to make peace with your father. I want his good will, as he has mine, and we will try to make the future atone for the past. There is one thing, my love, that Charlie failed to find out. That——” But Adele interrupted him, saying :

“Lawrence, do you know that Charlie is one of the greatest, grandest characters that ever lived ?”

“Charlie is a noble boy,” he answered.

“Noble ? Ah, indeed he is ! Lawrence, he had carried a grief about in his breast for years—a grief, you know, just like ours. The moment he found he could restore our happiness he ceased to nurse his own trouble, but trampled upon it and grieved for us. I hope the

daughter he found in his charitable journey will prove so great a treasure that he will feel repaid for all his sadness."

"Della, I did not think it possible for him to exhibit such devotion to any living creature. He adores Florence, and, in return, she dearly loves him. They are inseparable."

"Is she beautiful?"

"She is very beautiful."

"As lovely as Isabel?"

He smiled down upon her for her momentary jealousy, and replied: "No, Florence is not so lovely as our child. Isabel is fair as a white lily. Florence is like a crimson rosebud, so full of warm beauty, dusky and deep, that you always expect her to burst forth into something glorious. But she is not as lovely as our Isabel."

"You will be very fond of our child, Lawrence?"

"I have told her that my fear is I shall love her too well. Someone will carry her off when I prize her most."

"She has yearned for you ever since she learned you still lived. I shall not soon forget the rapture in her face when I told her we would go back to you. She threw up her hands with a glad cry, and exclaimed: 'Then I shall know my father!' She has almost existed on the anticipation, and never before have we induced her to go anywhere without me. The night you met her at L—— was the first time we have ever been separated."

"She looks melancholy, my love. Is it habitual, or has she met with reverses?" he asked anxiously.

"She came into the world, dear, under such melan-

choly circumstances, and her companions have been so grave and sad that one could really expect nothing but gloom from her. Perhaps, with gayer companionship and younger hearts about her, she may develop a new phase of character, though to me she is perfect as she is."

"You will be the most fitting companion for her after you have ceased to look so sad. Dear me! what shall I do to bring some of your color back? You are so pale."

She laughed at the quaint criticism. It seemed so sweet to once more hear him express concern for her welfare. Long she had cared for her father, who was not in very good health, in addition to her unusually close care of her daughter. In return they had lavished all their affection upon her, but had not learned to proffer that sweetest of all attention—considerateness.

How sweet it seemed to sit by his side, her hand in his, and hear him tell of all the sad days and sleepless nights they were leaving behind. Their forlorn marriage morn held not one hour so fraught with joy and unspeakable bliss as this.

They knew now that they had tasted the bitter to appreciate the sweet. They had discussed many things, when Lawrence said:

"But, darling, you did not answer the question I wished to ask, How did your father become possessed of those papers and Florence's picture?"

"Julia gave them to him," she replied.

"Julia? Why, my love, how did Julia get hold of them?"

"I do not know. She said they were in your pockets. I shall endeavor to find out. She always trusted me."

"She will not even know you now. She always was a little weak-minded, I thought, and she is a poor simpering imbecile now," he said, half-sadly.

"Oh, Lawrence, what could have caused it?"

"I do not know; at least, I never have been able to understand it; but if she had anything to do with these papers, it may be that that has made her temporarily weak. It might have preyed upon her mind to such a degree as to unbalance it. You know, she has lived such an isolated life that there was really nothing to break the force of a weight of conscience. The child must have stolen them. But when, and how?"

"I cannot remember when she could have been away from me long enough to do such a thing."

"But my coat and vest containing all these things were in a wardrobe at mother's. How could Julia gain access to them? And I know, and mother remembers, that I had the papers when I left the house, just before the accident."

"Poor Lawrence. The one who should have nursed and cared for you then stole away, and left you suffering physical as well as mental pain," softly murmured Adele, who could think of nothing but the great wrong she had done him.

Stroking her hair, in reply he said: "Well, it must be that Julia found those papers on the road. We shall never know, though, for she cannot talk coherently ten minutes to save her life."

"At any rate, we are not going to worry about it now, for we know who Florence is, and we have suffered so much that it would be foolish to drag up those dead ashes and scatter them about us. We shall live for a purpose now. We have a daughter's welfare to

secure, and there are duties waiting all about us for us to discharge. O, husband, we shall be so happy now."

Yes, dear hearts, they will be happy ; but there is pain and trouble in store for them yet !

They sat together in blissful innocence of the heart-ache their reunion was creating elsewhere. As the shadows of twilight deepened about them, and Frederic Moore intimated neither by presence nor sound that he was in the same building, Adele began to feel a sense of unrest.

Gently disengaging herself from her husband's arms, she said : "Lawrence, in our own great joy we must not be selfish. Father must not be neglected."

"No, indeed," Lawrence answered. "We must consider him first. Where do you suppose he is ?"

"I will look in his chamber," Adele said, leaving Lawrence to watch after her retreating figure.

She tapped softly upon the door of his room, but, receiving no summons, opened the door and went in. The sight that met her eyes was a most painful one, following her great happiness. At a window at the further end of the room, in a large wicker chair, sat her father. His elbows rested upon his knees, and his hands supported his head. The attitude of sadness, the sombre silence, and the dusky light made the picture a self-torture. Rushing to him, she flung herself at his feet, and gently lifted the gray head from the wrinkled hands, until she could look into the tear-stained face he sought so hard to hide.

"Father," she cried. "You are lonely ; I have, in my selfishness, left you too long ; come now with me, dear. There are many things we shall like to discuss together."

"No, daughter, no. You have not been selfish. Go back to your husband. I have had you so long that I can spare you now to him. Go back, child, this reunion has been a heaven to you. Go back to it."

"Oh, no, father, dear ; not a heaven. I used to call my home a paradise and heaven ; but that was long, long ago, and I have learned, father, that there is no paradise here : and, perhaps, the reason we have suffered so much is because we attached so much faith and love in our earthly friends. We have been so worldly, father, that God has punished us to teach us contrition. I see so plainly now, dear, that if we make idols of our worldly goods, and create a paradise here, we never can hope to gain admittance to the beautiful heaven our Bible tells of. I want you to see it as I do ; we must not deem our reparation complete until Isabel and her father are firm in this sweet faith."

"Isabel is pure as an angel now. What faith could make her purer ?" he cried, in defence of his heart's idol.

"Yes, she is pure and good, because temptations have never beset her ; she says her prayer mechanically from force of habit, because we taught her that she must not close her eyes in sleep until her lips had lisped the prayer."

"And is not that enough ?" he asked.

"No, that is not enough. There are other things to be taught, which nothing but pure, untrammelled faith can teach. Submission, humility, and self-sacrifice. Ah, father, it took me years to learn this submission to a Divine will ; but I had no one to help or to encourage me, but with you it will be different. You will have me to help you, and I shall never cease, father, until

you think as I think, and believe as I do. You will never be perfectly happy until you do."

He stroked her hair and said, kindly :

"You have been away from Lawrence, so long, my dear, I wish you would return ; he will certainly think it unkind in you and selfish in me."

"I will go back to him when you are ready to go."

He sighed quaintly, but she knew he was pleased. He straightened his tall figure and allowed her to lead him from the chamber.

When they had reached the room where Lawrence was restlessly pacing to and fro, Adele took her father's hand and said : "Lawrence, I have come home, as you understand, conditionally. Father desired to return ; I acquiesced on the condition that he would forgive our past offenses, and as you have told me you bear him no resentment, I agree to return to you. When my father and my husband can declare themselves at peace and without malice, then I will be a friend to them both."

They clasped hands, and Lawrence said : "I ask your pardon, sir, for every pang of sorrow I have caused you, and I cannot better show my good will than to tell you that I trust, from this on, you will share our home and interests, and let our future atone, if it can, for the past."

"I will not be outdone, in generosity, by an outraged husband, and for all the pain my stubborn pride and rashness caused you, I ask your pardon ; and I thank you, Lawrence, for your generous hospitality, which we will discuss after we reach home."

This conciliating dialogue was continued at some length, and when the conversation had reverted to the events of the past few years, Lawrence told him about

Julia's mental deficiency, and many other things of corresponding interest.

The trio that we leave now, in the splendid apartments of a New York hotel, is a happy one, and though Adele had known happiness when she lived estranged from her father, yet she thought to-night that no woman was ever so happy as she. Sitting at her father's side, with her loved husband sitting at her feet, she deemed her life wholly blessed.

Ah, it is so sad to know that shadows must follow those brilliant gleams of sunshine !

CHAPTER XX.

THE HAUNTED HALL.

Steadily up from their swampy forge the sparks of fireflies rise.
In the pool where the wading lilies make love through half-shut eyes.
To the whippoorwill who scolds like a shrew at the fluffy owl ;
While the night hawk shuffles by like a monk in a velvet cowl.
And the bat weaves inky west through the white star beams that peep
Down thro' the cypress boughs, where the frogs all sing "Knee deep!"

—*Robert McIntyre.*

WE left the young people at Mrs. Warwich's. Cora Russell had stopped on the threshold, abashed into silence, by the spectacle that met her view. She was a proud-spirited girl, though gentle and passive with her friends. Having given her love to Walter, and having, in her sweet innocence, failed to note the absence of ardor and passion in his attentions to her, it all flashed before her mind's eye to-day so suddenly and forcibly, too, that it is not strange that she hesitated to enter the room that held her love and her rival.

Walter had known Isabel but a few hours, yet the eyes he bent upon the fair face were laden with love.

Cora's keen sight caught the fire that flamed into the depth of his gaze and kindled his cheek. He had never looked at Cora so—never ! and now when she thought—poor girl—that she stood upon the verge of happiness, she found that she was being rapidly thrust into the pitiless chasm of disappointment.

Florence signified to the enwrapt pair, that they were

not alone by saying, "Isabel, let me present my friend, Miss Russell—Cora, Miss Hayne."

Isabel advanced graciously, saying, "Miss Russell's face is not strange to me. I am very glad to meet you."

"Nor yours to me, Miss Hayne. I am happy to welcome you home," Cora answered, then turning to Walter, who had advanced to greet her, she said: "Mr. Reynolds is very kind to honor us with his society again." Without a sign to show the struggle it cost her to speak calmly, and the lead in her heart grew heavier, as she remembered the look he had bestowed upon Isabel, and the smile that her slightest movement brought to his face, but to his rather flattering reply, she answered gayly, and shut up the jealousy in her aching heart, and was pleasant and affable, and if her heart was sad that day no one else was the wiser; she inquired after Dayne, and was informed that he had gone to engage the boats that were to carry them down the creek to the Haunted Hall.

Before the young ladies were fully equipped for their day's pleasure, they must have a hamper, packed with all the sweet delicacies that go to make a dinner in the greenwood inviting. How happy Mrs. Warwick's heart was that day as she filled the basket for the daughters of her sons! For years she had invariably sighed at thought of Lawrence, or Adele, and now she sighed, but it was such a happy sigh, that fluttered from her lips like a bird let loose from its gilded cage. When the basket was filled and the girls had declared themselves ready, at last, the party set off for the stream.

So charming a party seldom traverses country lanes. The delicate tissue of the girl's dresses swayed gracefully in the gentle air, while the lace parasols fluttered

and threatened to fly away each minute. What merry jests and little brilliancies dropped from their rosy lips as they sauntered slowly along. They had many such days; but in after years they liked to remember the soothing scent of the freshly-cut grass, and the wild roses that clambered over the garden fence that morning.

There is an epoch in everyone's life to which we like to look back. Every story has its bright page, and every life has its sweet memory. Perhaps it is only a walk through the meadow or an hour among the flowers, in the moonlight, but it is worth a ransom to us. We would not allow it to slip from us for twice its joy. It is a drowsy dream, from which we wake to find the world only a commonplace world after all, and we—well, we are mortals, older, wiser, and sadder, perhaps, but still mortals.

The Haunted Hall was an old-fashioned white stone house that stood on the bank of Mill Creek, five miles from Hayne Home. It was a two-story house, with wide, drooping eaves, and a rickety stairway running up on the outside, which opened into a porch that ran clear around the house at the second story. The trees formed a dense thicket on one side, and on the other the ground sloped down to the water's edge.

The owner of the house had murdered his wife and afterward hung himself there, and since then no one could be induced to inhabit the gore-stained domicile.

Of late the people in that vicinity had been heard to declare that sometimes, at night, the windows, bleak and drear in daylight, showed streaks of light through their faded curtains, but no one had ever been seen to come or go, and so the shattered old house had become famous as the Haunted Hall.

Our excursion party, in two boats, came gliding down the smooth water toward the landing at the Hall, and when the boats had touched their keels to the turf, they all sprang nimbly out and walked toward the ill-fated house.

"What a pity," Isabel exclaimed, "that this place is not habitable. What a beautiful country place it would make!"

"It could be made habitable in a very short time. A pound of nails and some soap and water would soon restore it to its usefulness," answered Florence.

"And what about the ghosts? Could they be nailed and scrubbed off too?" inquired Dayne, laughingly.

"I imagine a few doses of arsenic would exterminate *these ghosts*," Florence observed, and Dayne shouted aloud :

"Whoever heard," he cried, "of that remedy for *spooks*? Pray, Cousin Florence, what do you imagine these ghosts are?"

"Nothing but rats, or perhaps a poor forlorn cat or two," she said.

"But rats and cats do not carry a light from one room to the other, and people say that there really has been seen a light first in one window and then in another, until finally a human figure could be distinguished between the light and the curtain," Cora remarked.

"Pshaw!" interposed Florence. "Did you ever make pictures in the clouds and in the fire?"

"Yes, of course, I have," Cora replied, wonderingly.

"Then you must understand how these superstitious people fancy these things. You have not ventured your opinion yet, Mr. Reynolds," she said gaily, turning to Walter.

"I have never given the subject much thought, for I am not superstitious, Miss Florence."

"There! His views in this direction coincide with my own, I know. But what shall we do with this basket while we explore this dust-bedizened den? We cannot leave it where the feline relics will reach it," Florence said, brightly.

"Shall we hang it here on this large peg?" Dayne asked, as he hoisted the basket to carry it to a large wooden peg that protruded from the stone wall under the stairway.

"Oh, no!" rejoined Isabel; "perhaps that is where our late lamented host hung himself," with a light laugh.

"Well, if we return and find it *empty*, Florence and Walter will have to acknowledge that our theory is not all cat and rat nonsense," Dayne declared, while he hung the basket up and started in pursuit of the others, who had by this time ascended the steps and were taking a circuit of the narrow balcony. They at length came to a door that yielded to their touch, and swung back quietly on its hinges and let them in. The room they entered was a large parlor, with long, narrow windows, whose small, square panes made them seem like prison bars; the room contained a few articles of furniture, which, for its antiquity, would have to-day brought a fabulous price from some of our relic hunting *Ton*.

Then there was a large fireplace, surmounted by a wooden mantel, so high that one could scarcely see a book lying thereon, and the narrowness seized one with a fear that everything upon it would at any moment be hurled to the stone hearth below. There was in one

corner of the room a small piano. Its keys were yellow, and some of them refused to yield to the touch of the delicate fingers that ran over them, others went down with a jerk and cried out a plaintive wail that jarred harshly upon the sensitive nerves of the hearers; all, excepting Cora, who felt in this poor, old, neglected piano, a kindred spirit that sympathized with the desolate feeling that pervaded her heart this morning. She had, to be sure, come down in the boat alone with Walter, but his anxiety to keep pace with the boat that held Isabel hurt her more than anything else. His calm indifference and *nonchalance* that she had so admired in him were all gone this morning, and, in their place, was a restlessness that almost equalled nervousness, and the hand that was stretched forth to proffer to Cora kindly and courteous attention seemed listless and hasty, but when the same hand waited upon Isabel it seemed to linger about its offices, as though loth to quit them. Cora saw it all, but pride and good sense were her friends and did not desert her.

They strolled from room to room; there were quaint little *fauteuils* in old-fashioned broclettes, and there were tapestries and brocades, faded and moth-eaten. There were shelves of richly-bound volumes, bronzes and marble images. The visitors were wild with enthusiasm.

"Do you presume that no one has ever visited this place since the tragedy?" Walter asked.

"It does not betray a sign of having been invaded before. One would imagine, though, that it would be a rendezvous for all the tramps in the surrounding country," Dayne replied.

"Had they no relatives to come into possession?

Who were they, anyhow?" Isabel inquired, and Florence replied :

"Mr. Reede was a banker in town, very wealthy. I have seen his magnificent town house, and will show it to you some time. They came down here every summer and brought their friends, and I have heard grandma say they were charming people, and the tragedy was the result of sitting too long over their wine and walnuts. The guests, of course, went quietly home after the tragedy, but after the bodies were removed the servants would not stay here a night. It seems so ridiculous, doesn't it?"

"Well, I think such a catastrophe might produce a shock that a sight of the scene might always recall ; and in that case one can be excused, without being called superstitious. You are, evidently, a brave little girl, Cousin Florence," Isabel said, admiringly.

"If you are all going to discuss ghosts, rather than prowl around the house, I will go and play ; I can't give up that dear old piano," cried Cora, flitting out of the library into the large parlor, merely to get away from the pair who were so unconsciously giving her pain. When she had seated herself, and was thumbing the yellow keys, she heard a jingling sound, as of something metallic striking the sounding board. She listened a long time, as she touched various keys and found that it did not diminish the sound. Stooping, she peered under the lid and saw that, lurking in the shaded recess of the dark rosewood case, was an object that shone like silver. She slipped her hand under, and drew forth a small tin box ! At first she was half-frightened, and would have thrust it back, lest it contained a skeleton of the past, when she bethought herself of the

length of time that box would have lain there, had it belonged to the family who had lived here. A glance at the box was sufficient to assure one that it had been recently put there. There were no marks of fingers upon it, and instead of being coated with dust, it was bright and bore evidence of having received recent attention.

After a lengthy deliberation, she decided to open it without saying anything to the rest of the party ; she knew they were enjoying a spirited conversation, by the way their voices rang out in musical laughter.

Opening the lid, the first thing that met her eye was a handful of silver coin, all of which bore a date of at least twenty years back. Pushing this aside, she found a little memoranda, or diary, but the writing was in cipher and characters, and was as so much Greek to her, though she gazed at it spell-bound. She put her hand to her cheek, a habit she had when in deep meditation, and said, "Where have I seen this character-writing ? I have seen this same kind somewhere, I am sure." She turned the leaves over and over, but there was not a name, not a trace of English penmanship to tell whose the book was, or had ever been. There was nothing else—only the money and the book. She put the box with the money back where she found it ; but the book she cautiously slipped into her pocket, and as she did so, a thought flashed into her mind that made her gasp, to stifle the cry of rapture that seemed to her necessary to her joy.

"I know, now. I know where I have seen this cipher ! Oh, will this day ever end, I wonder ?" And she thumbed upon the keys without hearing them, she looked about the room without seeing anything ; so

enrapt was she in this dream of discovering a secret that had come into her possession in this hapless fashion. She was musing over it still, when Florence bounded into the room, with her dimples dotting her face in prettiest glee.

"Cora, do you know it is nearly noon? We have loitered here two hours. Come, we are going across to that little glen and spread our dinner. Bid your heart-broken piano a fond farewell and come."

Cora arose and followed her friend without comment, until they reached the hall, when Florence's quizzical look provoked the query: "Florence, why are you looking at me so strangely, child?"

"You look so serious, Code, I am wondering what you are thinking of," was Florence's answer.

Cora laughed lightly, and tried to evade the unspoken question, but obdurate Florence would not be put off.

"Tell me, Cora, please, why you are so distant with us all? Why don't you stay with us?"

Cora could not be cross with her little friend; so forcing a smile to her lips, she answered gaily:

"That old piano has given me the horrors. Floss, I thought as I sat there, that there is nothing in the wide world so sympathetic as a piano; it follows our mood, is gay when we are gay, sad when we are sad, and, no matter what our humor is, a piano will adapt itself."

"Well, Cora," observed Florence, laughingly, "that is a fine train of thought for a *picnic*."

"I told you the piano had given me the horrors," Cora answered, seriously.

"You did not find any goblins in it did you, Miss Cora?" asked Walter, who had overheard her last re-

mark. He noted the flush, followed by a pallor that overspread her face, and felt annoyed at what he supposed was foolish superstition. He did not dream that, instead of a goblin, she had found a book that would fight in armor against himself.

Then they descended the steps together ; Dayne and Isabel had crossed the lawn quite in advance of them, and were seated on a bank of moss near the water's edge.

As they descended the tottering steps that ended in a path near a clump of evergreen trees, Florence looked upon Dayne and Isabel, sitting in their grotesquely beautiful bower of foliage, and perhaps her heart gave a little jealous thud in spite of her loving, impetuous nature ; for she mentally abused herself for her momentary pang, adding, "I ought to be ashamed of myself. I *want* Dayne and everybody else to love Isabel ; she says she has never had a friend." Nevertheless it created a new sensation in her heart, and provoked a little desire to pique Dayne.

As they strolled slowly across the lawn, Dayne sang out in a rich tenor voice :

"Ye ho, ye ho, who's for the ferry,
The briar's in bud, and the sun's going down ;
And I'll row you so straight, and I'll row ye so steady,
And it's only a penny to Twickenham town."

"Take your passenger over, Cousin Dayne. I think I shall like Mr. Reynolds' steady rowing best," Florence retorted.

"Oh ! So, *Cousin* Florence ? Come then, Cousin Isabel, *you* will accept my escort. won't you ?" and she replied :

“Very gladly, Cousin Dayne,” and gracefully stepped into the boat.

When they had crossed the narrow channel, they found themselves among the most beautiful devices that nature produces. There were ivies trailing their long, slender sprays over and around gnarled oaks ; the golden primroses peeped from among their leaves like great stars ; the violets and ferns and daisies all peeped from their luxuriant cushions of moss, and the sunlight gleaming between the trees threw golden glints upon their varied shades.

The three fair young girls threw themselves down upon the mossy carpet, and, laying aside their hats, allowed the soft wind to make a reckless confusion of their sunny hair. How lovely they were ! They made a varied picture of loveliness. Isabel, with her burnished gold hair and pink and white face, sat at the foot of the tree ; on the left sat Cora, with her yellow curls and her waxen face ; and on the other side Florence, with her hazel eyes and reddish brown curls, reclined against an ivy-grown tree that had fallen among its brothers.

Dayne looked upon them in undisguised admiration, and, passing around to where Florence sat, he dropped at her side, saying :

“‘Faith, Hope, and Charity.’ May I sit at Faith’s right hand ?” and looked into Florence’s brown eyes.

“*I Faith?* Oh, no, Dayne !” she cried, in affected indifference.

“And why not ?” then lowering his voice, said to her : “You are not Hope, for you have——”

“Then I must be Charity, Dayne,” she answered, indifferently.

"No, you are not even charitable to me," he said, laconically.

"Why, Dayne, I always divide my apples and candy with you," and they all laughed at this hint of their childhood friendship, and then Florence averred that they must spread their dinner before the sun crept around to drive them away, and she tripped away to empty the basket of its luscious burden, leaving Dayne to sigh and ponder over her indifference. The only conclusion that he could possibly arrive at was that she was an "enigmatical little minx," which conclusion did not by any means pacify his restless desire to reinstate himself in her affections, as he believed that absence had completely wooed her thoughts from him.

Isabel was, perhaps, the only contented one among the group. Utterly unconscious of the havoc she had created in the little quartette, her sole wonder was, why they were all so kind to her, who had never before had a bosom friend? She did not know, innocent child, that she might have had scores of friends had she not clung with child-like tenacity to her mother always.

What a great dinner that was, and how charmingly served! Florence presided, and very pretty she looked doing the honors of the dinner, with her plump white hands fluttering here and there among the dishes and forks. A luncheon in the woods is always appetizing enough, but when sweetened with such enchanting smiles and pure, guileless jocundity, it is not to be wondered at, that one always feels a listless drowsiness after partaking so ravenously of the delicious viands.

The afternoon was spent in gathering ferns, swinging in grapevine swings, botanizing, and strolling

through the grounds that surrounded the Haunted Hall. Four of them were loath to return home, but Cora thought the day would never end. That little memoranda seemed to scorch her pocket ; her hand idly stole to the pocket that contained the important article, and it seemed to her they must all know of its presence, so conscious of it was she herself.

Going home that day, Florence, with a sly stroke of original scheming, succeeding in putting Isabel and Cora into the boat with Dayne, while she sailed away with Walter, who seemed in a most agreeable frame of mind, notwithstanding his momentary disappointment at not being able to row Isabel back home.

Walter and Florence kept up an animated conversation, occasionally sending behind them a peal of mirth that made the three occupants of the other boat laugh in sympathy.

Cora could not be persuaded to accompany the cousins to Wicksburr ; vainly they endeavored to induce her to spend the remainder of the day with them, but her mind was too full of ideas concerning that little book, to give her peace or rest until she had solved the mystery.

When they separated at the foot of the lane, Walter would have accompanied Cora home, but Dayne arrested any such intention, by saying :

“ Walter, if you will accompany my cousins I will walk home with Miss Cora, as I have an errand over there.”

His errand was to obtain some books that still remained in the library at his old home, and their walk being accomplished in silence, and the books being in his possession, there remained no excuse for him to

prolong his visit, so he returned immediately to Wicksburr.

He had no sooner left the house than Cora, forgetting the book in her pent-up grief, threw herself upon a lounge in the library and sobbed aloud in her chagrin and heartache, and there and thus Mrs. Russell found her when she came in to listen to her enthusiastic daughter go into raptures over her day's pleasure. Cora had not heard the door open, nor close; she still sobbed piteously. Her mother stood bewildered and too dazed to speak, until the passionate weeping brought tears of sympathy to her own eyes.

Stealing softly to the lounge, she knelt beside it, and raised the fair girlish head to her arm, and cried, in agitated voice :

“Cora, my darling, what has happened to you? Why do you cry, my child? Tell me; you distress me.”

“Oh, mamma, mamma!” was all she answered.

“Cora, I beg you to tell me what ails you. You left home this morning the happiest child, and now you come back to me in bitter tears. Tell me, darling, what has happened. You will trust your mother, Cora?”

“It is so selfish to worry you with my grievances, mamma; but I am so miserable, oh, so miserable!” Cora sobbed, in broken sentences; and, brightening up a little, threw her arms about her mother's neck and asked, with tears running down her face: “Mamma, tell me, impartially, if you have ever noticed Walter's manner toward me—what it signified to you. Do you think he ever—ever cared for me, mamma?” Her mother raised her brows in silent surprise, and pressed

her pink lips more tightly, perhaps, but hoped to reply in an indifferent manner.

"I cannot conjecture, my darling girl, what has happened to-day to disturb you so, and mentioning Mr. Reynolds as you do puzzles me more and more. I have observed his manner toward you, and always admired his dignified reserve, different to the gushing attentions the young men seem to prefer to shower upon their friends now. I never attempted to define his feelings toward you, love, because he is a straightforward, conscientious young man, and one could readily see that, when he desires to make you understand his feelings, he will candidly tell them to you. I admire him more than any young man I know. I hope you have been kind to him, Cora."

"Oh, yes, I have been kind; but he—he—"

Mrs. Russell began to get a glimmering of her child's meaning. The idea of Walter being indifferent to her idolized daughter's loveliness insulted her. With unusual asperity she exclaimed :

"Surely, my love, he has not been unkind to *you*? Pray tell me, Cora, what distresses you. I cannot help you in my ignorance."

"It is so humiliating, mamma, I don't see how I can tell even you. I was foolish enough last summer to mistake his kindness for something more than friendship. Perhaps he would have learned to care for me, but he—" She could not force herself to say it.

"He what? Has he neglected you, or been unkind to you, Cora?" Mrs. Russell asked.

"Oh, no, mamma, he is still most courteous and kind; but he is so different with Isabel—"

"With Isabel Hayne? Why, he never saw the girl until day before yesterday."

"I know. But, mamma, he loves her already. I saw it the moment I entered the house at Wicksburr. He looks differently at her, and speaks differently to her. Oh, mamma, I cannot tell you what I have suffered to-day. He was always good to me, but he never loved me. I see it so plainly now, he never loved me."

"But he will, Cora; I am sure he will. I hope, however, you have not committed yourself. He does not understand your feelings?"

"No, no! I am not so weak as that. I could not meet his eyes if he knew. No, I must swallow my disappointment. I can never hope for his love. I have been so happy. My life has been so sweet that I thought his love would be my crowning joy. I have never wished for anything that was not immediately granted, yet I never wanted anything half so much as this love, and yet it has been denied me. Mamma, why am I punished? I have been good all of my life; I have done no wrong, yet I am punished. Why is it so? Oh, mamma, did your heart ever ache like this? Don't cry, mamma; my selfish misery is distressing you. I will soon be calm; only just now I like to tell you my grief, then it will be easier. I wonder if I shall ever be gay or light-hearted again?"

Mrs. Russell stooped and kissed the pale cheek, with all the idolatry in her heart surging to her lips. It crazed her to see her only child, their petted darling, subjected to such disappointment. She herself had a violent temper. It required all of her strength to keep it under control. She longed, just now, to fling her compassion on the air, and express all the anger and

sympathetic disappointment in words that would scathe the ears of the man who had created this disaster in her household. She would not dare do it, however. Cora was gentle and mild. Her disposition was of her father's type. She was always shocked at her mother's anger, which repelled her, so harsh and hardened she seemed at such times. Mrs. Russell was cognizant of this fact, and would suffer anything herself rather than see her child suffer in addition to the pain that was already wringing her heart. "Yes, Cora, you shall be all the happier for this bitterness. I am going to send you a cup of tea, and you must drink it, then go to your room and be put to bed. You do not want to go to bed? Well, my dear, I insist upon it. You are as white as your handkerchief, and your eyes are twice as large as usual. Think of a sweet future, Cora, not a bleak one. It will all come right. He may be infatuated with her now, but he will recover."

She kissed the pale lips, and placed a pillow comfortably for the golden head to rest upon, and turned to leave the room. She had laid her hand upon the door when Cora said, faintly :

"Mamma, I forgot. I found something to-day. When we were storing things in the attic, do you remember we found a little book—a cipher, or character-language, alphabet I should say?"

"Yes, of course I remember. It was Mr. Warwick's. I remember we thought it so strange that he should have such a thing. "What about it?"

"I have found why he had that book. He kept a diary in cipher, though why he did such a sly thing as that I can't imagine."

“Give me the book, Cora.” And her mother grasped the little volume and left the room, grateful to the purple twilight that hid the intense eagerness and anxiety in her face. And Cora lay back upon the pillow in blissful ignorance of the use to which the little diary would be put to help her win her love.

CHAPTER XXI.

A DISCOVERY.

Out went the taper as she hurried in ;
Its little smoke, in pallid moonshine, died ;
She closed the door, she panted, all akin
To spirits of the air, and visions wide
No uttered syllable or woe betide !
But to her heart, her heart was voluble,
Paining with eloquence her balmy side ;
As though a tongueless nightingale should swell
Her throat in vain, and die, heart stifled, in her dell.

— *John Keats.*

WHEN Mrs. Russell left the library that night with the diary in her hand, her first act was to go to the kitchen and order a tray of delicacies sent in to Cora, with a cup of tea and a glass of wine. Being a most devoted mother, she would, on any other occasion, have gratified the wants and necessities of the lovely daughter herself, but to-night her mood was such that she could not trust herself to listen to the sorrowful cries of her child without creating a scene, and making her family tenfold more unhappy than they already were. So she grasped the little volume more tightly, and went directly to the attic. There was a book-

case there with shelves of books and drawers of papers. None of the drawers were locked. The case had been left there by Philip when he moved into the city, and when Mrs. Russell was superintending the storing of some surplus furniture, the little cipher, referred to by Cora in the previous chapter, had been found and put into one of the bookcase drawers.

Thither Mrs. Russell went, and was well-nigh overjoyed at finding it in the identical spot that she had placed it a few years previous. Taking it to a stand, she touched a match to a candle standing in an old-fashioned bronze candlestick. Then she drew up an old, high-backed chair, and dusted it thoroughly before allowing her pretty chintz gown to come in contact with it. She seated herself beside the small stand and opened both of the books. There was nothing in the little book that had lain in the attic but some accounts several years old, and a few little memoranda that had evidently been jotted down as reminders of as many appointments. In the back of it, however, were a couple of lines of single letters, or characters ; above them, in corresponding spaces, was the English alphabet.

Mrs. Russell compared a few notes, which convinced her she had the right clue to the secrets of the diary. She found it tedious enough to spell the words letter by letter, and it was after reading many pages of mere nothingness, so trifling and commonplace were they, that she laid the book down in disgust, and arose to leave the attic, when a whirl of the leaves of the journal showed her a page of characters almost all of which were underscored and punctuated with much accuracy. She resumed her seat, snuffed the candle, and

placed the cipher in corresponding view with the diary. It occupied full twenty minutes to make it out in English. She had written it upon an old envelope as it was deciphered, and the trembling tracery showed only too plainly the nervousness of the hand that penciled it. When, at last, that one page was copied she laid the pencil down, and, dropping her hands idly in her lap, sat stupidly staring at the paper in front of her. She might have been stone dead for all the sign of active life she gave; but the quick breathing and rapid pulse were evidence of agitation and nervous excitement.

How long she might have sat thus she could not tell, for the dinner bell rang and recalled her from her abstractedness to the common occurrences of life, and told her that she must put aside curiosity and go down to her husband, and appear natural and at her ease, even though her mind was tortured with doubt and perplexity, and her hands were trembling with nervous dread. She arose from her seat and stood transfixed. The bell sounded again, which aroused her from her apathy. A fierce, vindictive joy illuminated the woman's fair face, and she crushed the envelope in her hand as though she would fain clutch at the throat of a secret adversary.

“I have it!” she mentally exclaimed, tightening her lips. “I have it! This little time-stained book will do the work for me. My beautiful, gifted Cora shall not be sacrificed for that girl. Cora, my precious child, mother will settle your future. No more heartache, no more humiliation for *us*. But, oh! what I shall heap upon them if they are not willing to be led by kindness. I will be all that is fair. I will try kindness first, and,

if that is not effectual, I know," she exclaimed aloud, "what will be effectual."

She descended to the dining-room, unconscious of the pallor that had blanched her cheeks and lips. She found her husband seated at the table waiting for her with patient resignation.

He raised his eyes to greet her in his habitual kindly way, but the greeting was arrested on his lips, he was so astonished at her appearance.

"My dear, you are ill; you should not have come to the dining-room," he said laying his hand gently on her cold one.

"I am only worried. Have you seen Cora?" she asked.

"I observed her lying on the library lounge. I presume she is quite tired after her day's pleasure, and I did not disturb her." His voice was one of those deep voices that either ring out fiercely in passion, or sound low and musical in softened words. His hair was iron-gray as well as his beard; he was only about forty-five years old; his family relations were pleasant at all times, excepting when his wife indulged in one of her fits of anger. At such times he suffered enough to unbalance all the happiness that lay on the other side of the scales.

His wife was tempted to tell him of Cora's trouble, but she sensibly concluded that when her mind was in such a turbulent state as its present one, she was not qualified to speak either calmly or sensibly. So to his remark about Cora, she replied, briefly: "She is, indeed, weary, and almost ill from the excitement of the day."

"Well, my dear, I hope you are not making your-

self ill, in sympathy? Your cheeks look positively cold and drawn in their whiteness. Drink some coffee, and perhaps a glass of brandy will be good for you."

"Thank you, dear, I think the coffee will be sufficient."

They ate their dinner in silence, save for an occasional remark or question, and when her husband went out into the grounds for his after-dinner smoke, she went softly to Cora's couch and touched the hot forehead with her lips.

There was, as in nearly all country houses, a guest-chamber on the ground floor. To this Mrs. Russell had Cora conveyed; they changed her gown for one more comfortable, and then the anxious mother sat beside her to note her condition. Cora moaned unconsciously, which almost frenzied the loving parent, who spoke gently and softly, which had the result of bringing the beautiful eyes back from their roving stare, and for a moment she would speak quite rationally. At length they could do nothing themselves that had the power of restoring her, so they dispatched a servant in hot haste for a physician.

All night they watched beside the lovely face, and as morning approached Cora grew better. No sooner had she become conscious of the anxious faces about her than she implored them to lie down, especially her father, who was not very strong at best, but he would not leave her. Then they prevailed upon Mrs. Russell to go and lie down, which she did, knowing that if she hoped to accomplish anything toward Cora's salvation, she must not waste all her strength before her opportunities presented themselves.

So she went away, and, as it was late before she fell

asleep, it was very late in the morning when she returned to her daughter's chamber. Early that morning Florence and Isabel set out for a walk. Florence's father accompanied them, and it was with a proud air and complacent smile that he listened to their cheery chatter and happy, girlish confidences. Florence grasped her father's arm upon leaving the house, and had not relinquished her hold upon it since. Her father could not hide the pride he felt in the possession of such a charming daughter. He listened enraptured to her voice, and her faintest smile brought a smile to his face.

They called at Cora's home only to be informed that Cora had been overtaxed the previous day and was now too ill to be seen. So they left tender messages and went away.

For four days life was very quiet at the house of the Russells, and the young people at Wicksburr were enjoying a few quiet visits together, deferring all their excursions of particular interest until Cora should be able to join them. Every day they called to see her but were only granted the shortest interview, as the physician had insisted upon absolute quiet.

One morning Florence mentioned, casually, the name of Dayne's mother. Mrs. Russell instantly inquired :

“Has Mrs. Warwick returned home from Mobile, Florence?”

“Yes; my aunt returned yesterday morning, and, learning that Dayne was here, came down last night.”

“And how long will she remain?” Mrs. Russell asked.

“I understood her to say they would remain over Sunday.”

"This is Friday. I shall be pleased to see Mrs. Warwick before she returns to town. You may tell her so, Florence."

"I will, thank you ;" and then they talked of other affairs until they had made an extended visit. When they arose to leave they both stood beside the chair in which Cora lay and told her how much they desired to welcome her back to their circle, and mentioned a number of anticipated visits they hoped her to join them in. As they stood beside Cora's chair Mrs. Russell could not but admire their personal charms. She thought, not without a little disdain : "They are well matched. Isabel is weak, but Florence has spirit enough for both ; they are so nearly the same in stature that they might be taken for twins. They are handsome girls, but they pale beside my child."

The next day Mrs. Russell gave minutest directions to the maid regarding Cora's medicines, and stated that she had an errand which could not be trusted to any one else. She put on a neat little bonnet to match the walking costume she wore, and threw a *visite* upon her arm, as the days were getting cool. She walked over to Wicksburr and, arriving at the house, was admitted by Jane, who informed her that Mrs. Warwick, senior, was not in, but Mrs. Philip Warwick would see her.

The conversation was constrained and embarrassing. Mrs. Warwick did not understand why it was so, but her shyness was provoked by the constraint in Mrs. Russell's manner. Finally, when the latter could no longer endure the suspense, she asked if she might be allowed to speak confidentially without danger of being overheard. Mary replied that there was no one in the house but herself and Jane. The latter being in the

kitchen was quite beyond the reach of their voices. Then Mrs. Russell began :

“ My mission, Mrs. Warwick, is painful to me and will be as much so to you. I want to ask you where your son’s affections are fixed, or if he is in love at all ? ”

Mary looked perfectly amazed and did not answer. The idea occurred to her that Dayne had, in his reckless fun-loving way, been carrying on an innocent flirtation with Cora, but she could not entertain the thought for an instant. Therefore she only looked the surprise she could not utter.

“ You do not answer me ; either you do not choose to, or you do not know ; which is it Mrs. Warwick ? ” Mrs. Russell asked, imperatively.

“ Mrs. Russell, even if I knew anything of my son’s love affairs, I am too dazed now to answer, and, perhaps, if I were not surprised, I should not care to mingle my gossip with his affairs.”

“ Your gossip ? I understand the hint, Mrs. Warwick, and beg you in kindness to tell me if he loves Florence or not. He has always paid her marked attention ; though, so far as we have ever been able to learn, he has not made love to her.”

“ I cannot see why his and Florence’s friendship should concern our neighbors ? I hope they are old enough to use some discretion, Mrs. Russell,” Mary answered, warmly, and Mrs. Russell heaved a sigh of annoyance, and continued :

“ They are very discreet. You will not give me the satisfaction I desire, so I will have to make known my wish without it. I have other plans for your son, and if he is not bound to any one else, it will be so much better.”

Mary's face flushed with indignation, but she did not interrupt the familiarity that insulted her. "But I must tell you first that it is humiliating to me to do this, but it is for my child's sake, Mrs. Warwick. My daughter is unfortunately hopelessly in love with Walter Reynolds, and—" She stopped to regain her fast failing courage, and Mary interrupted her with a voice full of cutting scorn :

"Pray hasten on, I am anxious to know what Dayne can have to do with your daughter's love for Walter."

"Mrs. Warwick, I pray you do not make my task harder than it really is, for I assure you I have only the kindest feeling for you and will be your friend if you will only use your influence to persuade Dayne to marry Isabel. There!—it is all told. I want your son to marry Isabel to get her out of the way of Cora's love. Cora is all I have. I cannot see her sacrificed thus. O, Mrs. Warwick, it is a mother pleading for her child. Grant my prayer," and she sobbed aloud.

Mary drew her figure up proudly, and answered :

"You ask me to sell my boy for your friendship. I don't want it, Mrs. Russell. Again, you ask me to sacrifice my only child to save your only child. That is noble. I know without your telling me that it is a mother pleading for her only child. A selfish mother praying to a mother to sacrifice the latter's child for the child of the other. I can't grasp your idea, Mrs. Russell; either you are quite overtaxed with watching Cora, or you are a selfish, intriguing mother. I know not which; but let us understand each other right now. I do not know anything about Dayne's friendships of late. I used to think, and have always hoped, that he would love Florence. I am, however, on account of his long

absences from me, unable to say whether or not their friendship has ripened or faded; at any rate, Mrs. Russell, I shall not interfere. I selected my husband and I think my son is capable of selecting a suitable wife."

"Mrs. Warwick, I came over here to solicit your help. I thought your gentle disposition and goodness would be to my advantage; I am mistaken; you can be obdurate as well as I," Mrs. Russell answered, quietly.

"Judge me by yourself, Mrs. Russell. Certainly I can and will be obdurate. What mother would not resent such a selfish behest? The times of sacrifices and kings slaying children are past; they belong to barbaric ages, Mrs. Russell, and I repeat, I will be obdurate. I shall be most deeply grieved to learn that Cora is disappointed. I entertain the deepest regard for her; but I love my boy, perhaps as well as you love your daughter. If he should learn to love Isabel, and the love was reciprocated, I should be very glad to see them marry. I love one niece quite as well as the other." Mary's voice died away in a murmur, she could not realize, even yet, that this woman had actually asked her to marry her boy to a girl whom he had known less than a week. Mrs. Russell's face had been flushed during the conversation, but now it was growing white; her hands shook until the chain attached to her silver card case clinked noisily. The task was harder than she had dreamed.

"You do not think," she said, "that Dayne would willingly marry Isabel if I asked him? She is much more beautiful than Florence, and any man ought to be proud of her as his wife."

"Certainly, anyone ought to be proud of her, but that does not signify that she would accept Dayne, if he offered himself. I repeat that I am sorry Cora is unhappy, but your request is the most unheard-of one in the world, and I decline to meddle with other people's affairs." Mary said this in such a withering voice, that however loath Mrs. Russell was to meet extremes, she forgot her loathing now under the scorching scorn that fairly emitted sparks from Mary's eyes.

"Mrs. Warwick, you drive me to extreme measures. I came over wishing to do only what is fair ; you raise yourself so loftily above meddling with other people's affairs that I think I may quote an old adage with perfect fitness ; and that is relative to sweeping one's own dooryard." She stopped to note the effect of her words. Mary's face still wore that look of calm scorn ; she did not flush nor pale at the thrust of Mrs. Russell's remark.

"I am in ignorance again of your motive ; when you please you may enlighten me, and I shall be able to talk freely, if you mean that there is anything in my life that should be erased I should like you to tell me of it, for I cannot now recall it."

Mrs. Russell had torn the page containing the alphabet from the book and now drew it from her pocket. Leisurely she opened it and smoothed out its creases.

"Can you read that cipher, Mrs. Warwick ?"

"Certainly I can, as readily as English. My husband and I corresponded this way during our betrothal while he was at school." Her face betrayed the least amusement as she recalled the many charming letters which had come to her in these characters.

"Your husband evidently used this cipher for another purpose after his marriage."

"For what purpose, Mrs. Russell?"

"Keeping a diary."

"Oh, is that all?" Mary asked, with a sigh of relief.

"It is enough, Mrs. Warwich, to convince me that your husband is a wicked and designing man. This little yellow diary has told tales that doubtless he had hoped to carry to the grave untold. You can read this cipher you say, Mrs. Warwich; you would better read it. I fancy you will know your husband better when you have read *that page*." Mary looked clear over the book at Mrs. Russell, and, rising to her feet, exclaimed proudly:

"Mrs. Russell, I cannot credit my sense of hearing. You, whom I have always respected as the embodiment of culture and refinement, to come to me under the guise of a friendly visitor and hand over to me a journal, the private thoughts of my husband, and acknowledge in this bold-faced manner that you have dared to interpret that writing and learn such things as my husband chose only to tell to the mute pages of his journal, is something that surpasses my ideas of honor! I decline to read it; if Mr. Warwich had deemed it best not to tell me what he has unwisely trusted to that little volume, I shall not at this late hour pry into it. I never suspected my husband of disloyalty, and I do not now believe him capable of doing anything so dishonorable as this thing that you have done."

When she had finished her passionate speech she stood defiantly facing the woman who sat in per-

fect complacency before her, and listened with unusual calmness to the words that Mary had hurled at her. When Mrs. Warwick had ceased speaking her visitor drew a dainty sigh, and, with a stage like gesture—a shrug and a wave of the hand, with an aggravating pose of the eyebrows, replied :

“ Mrs. Warwick, I believe everything you say about your faith in your husband. Since I have lived in this neighborhood I have often heard it remarked that no marriage bonds had ever held more contentment and perfect happiness than yours. I am sorry to be the one to shatter that happiness ; but everyone must suffer sometime, and now your day of suffering is at hand. Read this book. There is disgrace, nay, crime there, and when you have read it you will understand how tightly and securely I hold you in my power.”

CHAPTER XXIL

A TROTH.

When shall we know each other, love ?

In age, when worthy lives shall prove—

 Ah, that were late ;

 Shall it not be till one must kneel,
 Shedding hot tears the other cannot feel,

 And blaming fate ?

—*A. Tresize Saunders.*

MARY’s lip curled scornfully as she reached out her hand to take the book from Mrs. Russell. Having clasped her fingers tightly over it, she raised her eyes, deliberately and coldly, to meet the gaze of her visitor.

Her hand did not tremble, neither did her voice falter as she proudly said :

“Yes, I will read it ; not to pry into my husband’s thoughts, but to defend his fair name. There may be a mistake here. This writing looks very much like his. This cipher, I believe is known only to ourselves, and if there is crime here there is a mistake somewhere. If you have read it correctly, and find that there is deception here, the book is a fraud. My husband could commit no crime.” But still she did not open the book.

“Read that page, and see,” Mrs. Russell said impatiently.

And then Mary opened the little musty volume, and carefully seated herself to read it. By and by the proud smile left her face, her eyes dilated, and her breath came in gasps. She must have cried out but for the tightly-clenched teeth, through which nothing but a groan could press itself. The torture she silently endured was beyond Mrs. Russell’s comprehension. She could not have felt the exultation she did feel had she known that Mrs. Warwich suffered a thousand deaths in that little period. When she had read to the very end of the page she loosened her grasp on the little book, which fell noiselessly to the floor, and sank back in her chair with heartrending moans. Mrs. Russell stepped quietly forward, put the book in her pocket, and left the room. Poor Mary, perfectly conscious of her suffering, but oblivious to all else, moaned and moaned, but uttered not one word until the hissing sound in her ears died away and her brain seemed clearing, then she opened her eyes, and regrettfully murmured: “My husband !”

She dreaded to look about her. It seemed to her

that a sight of Mrs. Russell's cruel face would drive her mad. She shivered at the remembrance of her voice. She lay there, trying to build up her hope upon something. Surely some plan would eventually suggest itself, for she had always been truthful herself, and did not know

What a tangled web we weave
When first we practice to deceive.

But she would shield Philip for love's sake and for Dayne's sake, but she could not sacrifice Dayne to save his father. On the other hand, the only thing that could be done was to place the case before her son, and let him choose between happiness and disgrace. How she trembled and swayed as she arose from her chair and tottered feebly to the door. Her face was blanched to marble whiteness, and her lips were pressed tightly together. At first she experienced unutterable relief at not finding Mrs. Russell's exultant eyes watching her misery; but now she regretted that she must go in search of her, but she went, and found her complacently watching some tame pigeons picking their breakfast from the crumbs that Florence had scattered for them. The opening of the door attracted her attention. She arose and came instantly forward.

“I am sorry, Mrs. Warwick, to have caused you such grief.”

“*Grief*, Mrs. Russell? Is it worse than that. It is living death. Can you picture misery like mine? Can you feel for one instant a tenth of my torture? Oh, Mrs. Russell, this morning I thought no one so blest as I. When I went to bed last night, with

my boy's kiss yet warm upon my lips, I thanked God for His goodness to me. I could not understand why I should be blest with so true a husband and so noble a son, when some poor women, more worthy than I, should have trouble and care. Can you imagine this awakening?"

"I am sure it is very hard, and I am sorry for you," Mrs. Russell said, quietly.

"And you will not be hard upon me? You will give me the book and——"

"You know on what condition."

"You still hold to your proposition?" Mary asked, faintly.

"Yes, I still hold to that."

"What if I refuse to accede to it?" Mary asked, frigidly.

With a shrug, Mrs. Russell answered: "Then I would not give much for your peace in this community."

"You will not keep the knowledge of this a secret?" Mary cried, in distress.

"For nothing? No! You know what I came here for."

"And *my* son is the price of your silence?" interrogated Mary.

"Yes, Mrs. Warwick. When your son is the husband of Isabel I will hand over this book, and promise silence. Thenceforth you will have nothing to fear from me."

"Oh, my precious boy!" Mary cried, covering her face with her hands, "how shall I tell it to you?"

"I will tell him if you——" Mrs. Russell began; but Mrs. Warwick interrupted her by exclaiming, frantically:

"No, no; I will tell him. I am the one to stab my boy."

"Well, I cannot tarry here, Mrs. Warwich. I will give you an opportunity to speak to your son. Will you tell me when I may call for my answer?" Mrs. Russell said, rising to go.

"Not soon. Surely you do not mean to hurry this matter up? You will give us time?" Mary implored.

"Now, Mrs. Warwich, the case lies between us this way: The longer we delay the more Cora will suffer, and the peace will be on your side the sooner it is over—well *vice versa* you know. You are gaining nothing whatever for yourselves by a delay. The sooner it is over the sooner you will get accustomed to it."

"You go about it in such a cruel, cold-blooded way that I cannot imagine you realize that you are dealing with human passions."

Infuriated, Mrs. Russell exclaimed, stepping closer to Mary: "Mrs. Warwich, I acknowledge that I am hard upon you; but I would be harder yet for Cora's sake. I would go to direst extremes for her. All the feeling and passion of my heart is centred in my child. Yes, I could be harder still for Cora's sake."

"Cora ought to be proud of this devotion," Mary replied, with withering contempt. "She is more conscientious than her mother. I wonder how she would take such overtures?"

"Mrs. Warwich, I will give you until Saturday-night to settle this between Dayne and Isabel. You would better invite me to witness the ceremony, I never should feel satisfied with the papers. Arrange it to suit yourself, and let me witness the ceremony, and then I shall hold my peace."

The door closed, and she was gone.

Mrs. Warwick excused herself that evening on the plea of a violent headache, and, instead of coming down to dinner, remained in her room walking the floor, wringing her hands, and crying and praying for help. Thus Dayne found her, when, in answer to her summons, he appeared at her door and rapped for admittance. He stepped back in alarm at her white face, with the dark circles beneath her eyes and the white, trembling lips.

"Great heaven, mother! What is the matter?" She threw herself in his arms and sobbed:

"Oh, Dayne, if you were only my baby yet, that I might save you this!"

"This what, dear? Remember, I don't know what grieves you. Tell me quick, what has happened," he cried, in consternation.

"That dreadful woman! She will do all she says. She will ruin your father and you. We shall all be disgraced."

"Mother calm yourself. I cannot help you until you do."

"You can never help me, Dayne, and I am powerless to help you," she whispered, hoarsely.

"Well, then, dear, tell me what has happened. What dreadful woman do you mean?"

Mary summoned all her courage and stifled her agitation the best she could. Dayne thought her the noblest woman earth held as he watched her choking down her sobs, talking in broken sentences, and clinging to him like a little child.

"My son, some one committed a cruel deed years ago and you and I must suffer for it. That is always the way. We must pay the penalty. How can I tell you

it, Dayne? It tears my heart out to look into your eyes and tell you this dreadful truth." He drew her gently down upon a sofa beside him, and said gently stroking her hair :

" Go on, dear ; don't think of me. I am only sorry for you. First begin at the beginning. Who committed the deed ? "

" My husband." She felt him start, but he answered, softly :

" Father? What has he done? "

" My boy, it is a dreadful thing to tell. Be as lenient as you can. Your father and I urged Lawrence and Adele to get married. I swear to you, Dayne, before Heaven, that I believed all was right until to-day. That is what I have to tell you. He was to bring the minister, and, instead of employing a minister, he sent Cronie to the city, and he hired one of his chums to come and perform the ceremony. Your father paid the man, through Cronie, thirty dollars to do it. Oh that dreadful morning ! No wonder the heavens were angry and cried out against us."

" Mother, is this true? Did my father ever do such a cowardly thing? Can there not be some mistake? Oh, surely, *surely* my father could not be guilty of that. How can you believe it, mother?" Dayne cried, wildly, rubbing his eyes as though to awake from some hideous dream.

" Ah, son, I would only too gladly grasp at a possibility of error, but this afternoon I have lived again all these years, lived through their happiness, misery, and all here are spots that I thought then were white—they were black. Your father had an undying hatred for Lawrence, but so effectually did he hide it that even I

had no idea of it, but I can see it now. Oh, Philip, why have you been so good to me? It makes this grief so much greater."

"Poor, little, tender mother, who could help being good to you? But tell me how you found this out, I know so little."

"Dayne, would you sacrifice your happiness, your love, and all your hopes to hide this secret and save us this disgrace?" his mother asked with wistful tears standing in her eyes.

"It depends, mother," he replied, "upon how effectually a sacrifice would hide it; if it is known to any one, and from all I have gathered I understand some woman has threatened you with it, it will not be hidden long. Has some one learned the secret?"

"Yes."

"And is trying to extort money, I suppose?"

"Money? I never thought of that. No, if it were money I should pour it like rain until it is all gone, then how gladly would I work for more! Oh, no, my boy, for once money will not suffice; the penalty strikes deeper than our purse," she murmured wearily.

"But, mother mine, if you could guess just what my feelings are at present, you would make one more effort to enlighten me."

"Well, my boy, ask me—ask me anything—I seem to have lost my power to think! I can remember but one thing; that is, that it rests with you to hide our shame; perhaps you will refuse to marry her even, for—"

"Marry whom?" Dayne gasped.

"Oh, I forgot; you do not know. My son, the price of her silence is your marriage with Isabel."

Dayne's dumb stare seemed to recall his mother's scattered senses. Excitedly she hurried over the substance.

"You see, Dayne, it happened this way: your father kept a diary in cipher, in which he chronicled all of this treacherous deed, and that ill-fated diary is in Mrs. Russell's possession. How she obtained it I do not know, but I do know that she flaunted it before my eyes and tried to make me read it. I only read one page, but it froze my brain; and God knows what the other pages are stained with."

"But how could *she* know what it contained if it was in cipher?"

His mother explained, incoherently adding, "Yes, yes; the price of her silence is Isabel's hand. Cora loves Walter, and Mrs. Russell thinks Walter loves Isabel, and wants her out of the way. Dayne, you look defiant. Tell me what you will do. Will you marry Isabel to save your father? Think of the shame and disgrace we must suffer! Think of your father's punishment. Oh, Dayne, I pray you marry her, marry her! I shall die if disgrace overtake us. I could not live and suffer this degradation. Dayne, speak to me; tell me what you will do."

Mary having wrought herself into a frenzy, rocked to and fro, wringing her hands and moaning, while the boy sat with his head resting in his hands, the picture of despair. Slowly raising his white face, he said sullenly:

"Mother, you forget that the choice is not all on my side. I grant that marrying a charming girl like Isabel is not of itself terrifying, but she is at liberty to refuse."

"Yes, but she will not. Why, my son, she will not

dare refuse ! Think of the misery and disgrace in store for them if she will not accede. Think what she is. Ah, dear God ! Isabel could not live under the scorpion touch of disgrace. She will not refuse—ask her, Dayne ; ask her."

"She had better be dead in the flesh than live on with nothing alive in her heart. I should rather ask her to die with me than this other. For God's sake, mother, can it be that you have lived with father all these years, without having discovered the taint of sin in him ?" and Dayne walked across the floor, vehemently brushing his hand across his brow, where the moisture glistened in little beads.

"Don't, Dayne ! He is your father. He is my husband, and none better ever lived. Save us Dayne, *save us !*"

"There, there, little suffering mother, don't despair ; something will surely come up to help us. We can't do anything any way until we see father——"

"Oh, my child, he cannot possibly come before Monday, and she will not wait longer than Saturday night. The whole world would know of it before Monday. We dare not wait."

With a long-drawn sigh, the poor boy muttered : "All right, mother, don't cry any more. I'll see Isabel to-night and if she will take me 'for worse' I will do my part." When he looked down upon her she was swaying, and should have fallen, had he not caught her, and gently laying her on the lounge, called for Jane.

Before the old servant had reached them, however, Mary opened her eyes and feebly cried :

"Go and ask her, Dayne—Go ! don't mind me—go

to her—that will help me more than anything else. Go, dear, Jane will care for me."

Her distress was so pitiable, he could not refuse her. Kissing her tenderly, with quivering lips, he went in search of Isabel, finding her almost before he had begun the search.

A low balcony on the front side of the house embraced the two windows of Isabel's room and one opening from a guest chamber, at present occupied by Mrs. Warwich.

As Dayne turned to leave his mother a low sound reached his ear, which seemed to come from the balcony. At any other time he might not have felt curious enough to investigate. Being so disturbed to-night, even that indefinable sound filled him with instinctive dread, and impelled him to turn and look out upon the balcony, where, crouched upon a low stool, her head resting against the iron grating, sat Isabel. Her face, like chiseled marble, shone white in the purple twilight. The petals of the roses that clambered over the railing were lying all around, as though in her mute anguish she had torn them from their stems and let the evening air scatter them all about her, just as the happy days of her young life were scattered about in her memory. There were no tears on her face, no sobs rose to her white lips, only that disconsolate moaning.

Dayne forgot his own grief—what was his torture compared to that of this white, helpless thing that crouched among the pitying roses! He stepped through the window and knelt beside her, but could think of nothing to say.

She raised her eyes from the rose-leaves to his face, and then flung out her arms to him, crying: "Oh tell

me this is not true! tell me it is a nightmare, a hideous dream, or that I am insane—tell me anything but that it is true!"

"Poor Isabel! it is true—sadly true. How much have you heard?"

"All—every cruel word. It chained me here; I could not get away. Oh, Cousin Dayne, why need it be true?"

"It is best that you have heard it, Isabel; better than having me tell it. You know what I am here for? I cannot offer you any comfort—there is none. You will sooner or later hate me for this treachery of my father; I would not blame you, Isabel, though God knows how I loathe the thought of it. This woman has us in her power and there is but one escape. That is for us to marry. I leave it to you, Isabel," and his voice quivered just a little, "to choose between the two—unhappiness or disgrace. If you will marry me I will be all that you wish, do all that you desire. I will devote my life to your comfort. I cannot promise to make you happy, but I shall gratify your slightest wish. I would give you my life in payment for my father's sin if it would cancel the wrong, but it will not; and now I offer you all that I can—my name and protection. Will you take it, Isabel?" His voice was so soft and tender and kind it smote her conscience, and impulsively she threw out her hands to him and whispered:

"Dayne, you are so noble and good, your courage makes me ashamed; you offer me this protection so kindly, just as though every hope of your life would not be shattered. I am a coward not to either accept it gratefully and gladly, or else decline it and face disgrace courageously. What would happen, Dayne, if we do not marry?" she asked in despair.

"My father would never dare to come home. I should take mother away from the disgrace, and devote my life to making her at least comfortable."

"And what of me?" she asked, incredulously.

He shuddered with pity for the hapless girl who had done no wrong, but who could never hold up her head in pride again. "Isabel, you will be better off as my wife," he said, simply. She turned her white face to him in the starlight and in sheer desperation decided their fate.

"Dayne, I will marry you conditionally."

"Yes, explain," he answered, faintly.

"There is no use for us to attempt such a farce as contentment together. You have other hopes and I—well, Cousin Dayne, I could not esteem anyone more than I do you, but that kind of love is so different, though I shall always love you as the noblest man I know; but Dayne, we would better make the sacrifice and let that end it so far as we are concerned. Let us be bound with marriage ties, and—" she stopped. Her voice was so husky she could not finish for awhile. "And then you go your way and I'll go mine. Will you do this, Dayne?"

"I will do whatever you wish," he said, meekly.

"Could we be married secretly, without the least shadow of suspicion?"

"Why are you so particular, Isabel? Why need you care?"

"I may as well tell you the truth, Dayne. I am only doing this for mamma's sake. I am sure this will kill her if she finds it out, and I prefer she should not know it."

"But, Isabel, they must know it, for they will have to go through another ceremony."

"Well, they can arrange that afterward. Let our marriage be secret, Dayne."

He could not refuse the wistfulness in her voice, so he answered : "Very well, Isabel, it shall be secret. I have it, Isabel, the ceremony shall take place—when? to-night?"

"Any time ; have it over or the suspense will kill me, Dayne."

"I have a plan ; meet me in the summer-house to-night at eleven—that is only an hour and a half," he said, consulting his watch, "an hour-and-a-half of this suspense, Isabel, and then it will be over, and—then—well, I don't know what *then* will be. We can only wait and see. Will you be at the summer-house?"

"Yes ; but promise me, Dayne, you will never make any claims upon me, nor exact any duties from me, nor ever speak of it until I give you leave?"

"Isabel you are as free as the air; so far as I am concerned. I will never intrude. Go in now, the dew is falling heavily."

She stepped through the low window, into the darkened chamber. Dayne escaped through his mother's chamber, and went out into the starlight.

CHAPTER XXIII.

A MIDNIGHT MARRIAGE.

I'm sad this hour, with spirits drooping low,
All charms of life are losing fast their glow;
The brilliant sky of youth is dark to-day,
Its dreamy views all having passed away.
The tide of time is swifter in its speed,
Nor giving to my woes a passing heed,
As I proceed along the downward line
Unto the closing drama of my time.

—*Carl Cadmus.*

ON the principal street of the pretty little town near Hayne Home lived John Jason, the Justice of the Peace. He was sitting in his library, with his feet encased in slippers, and a dressing-gown wrapped snugly about his portly figure. A noise caused him to drop his paper and turn his eyes towards the glass door, upon which was one of those old-fashioned gongs that make one's ears ring with its piercing sound. The old gentleman arose from his comfortable chair and drew a deep, long breath as he muttered : "Well, who is after me at this ghostly hour?"

He flung open the door, and met on the threshold a surprise in the form of a pretty, bright-eyed, but very pale young lady. He invited her in, expressing his astonishment at receiving a visit from so dainty a guest at such an unseasonable hour. She talked hurriedly, supplicating him to grant her a favor. He was a gen-

erous, kind-hearted man, and, having once lost an adored daughter, was always most tender with girls, and this one was so sweet, so pale and pathetic, he felt the deepest, sincerest sympathy for her. He listened to her tale, and stroked her hair kindly, occasionally giving expression to his interest in what she was telling him. She had been there nearly twenty minutes when a sound of approaching wheels broke the stillness of the outer world, and set the visitor's nimble fingers to flying nervously to fasten the long, dark cloak that enveloped her slight figure.

"There they are, now. I will slip through the hall. You will do this for me, because—" Then she raised her eyes to his face, and tremblingly asked: "It is not wicked?"

"No, Miss Hayne, it is not wicked."

"And it is not unlawful?"

"No, my poor, dear child, it is not unlawful."

She took his hand between her own and said: "Then you will do it, squire? Will you not help me? You say it would be neither wicked nor unlawful; then will you not do it? Promise me, quick. Will you not help me?" A sound of that terrible gong pierced their ears.

"Oh, there they are, and you have not promised!"

He pushed her hair back from the smooth, white brow, and kissed her as reverently as though she were his own petted child. A tear was stealing slowly down his cheek as he patted her head and said:

"Go now, my child. I give you my promise; I will help you." And in grateful love she laid her lips upon the old man's hand and kissed it; then, darting through the hall and out into the night, she climbed upon a horse that waited in ambush, and rode slowly home

through the darkness, which would have been intense but for the stars that twinkled sadly upon her.

“Squire Jason’s later visitors were Dayne Warwick and his mother. He admitted them, and listened kindly to the tale of woe they unfolded. Mrs. Warwick omitted her husband’s name and the part he had to do with the false marriage. They allowed the old gentleman to surmise what he pleased about the unfortunate position they were occupying. Mary’s voice failed her often, and Dayne was obliged to help her out with the narrative, which was at last finished. With dreary apprehension they awaited his judgment. After a long deliberation, he said :

“Mrs. Warwick, there is something very mysterious about the circumstances ; but I presume I know as much as I have a right to expect ; and on account of our long acquaintance I feel bound to help you. It is almost eleven o’clock now. We will not much more than reach the place in time. Why did you not bring the young lady along with you ? It could have been done here as well.”

“Remember, Squire, the ceremony is sacrifice enough, without the strain on her nerves this ride would cause,” Dayne replied.

“You are right. I admire your courage and spirit, Dayne. You are a noble boy,” Squire Jason said, kindly, and, seating himself at his desk, proceeded to make out the license. Dayne walked restlessly to and fro, while his mother sat tapping the carpet with her foot.

When the papers were all made out the Squire folded them neatly and placed them in his pocket, then went out into the night with his guests, and at six minutes before eleven they entered the summer-house which

stood on the bank of Mill Creek, just at the foot of Aunt Prue's garden.

When they entered a little figure, clad in a long cloak of dark blue cloth, and a lace scarf wound carelessly around her head, came forward to meet them.

"I am here, Dayne," she said, softly.

And he took the pretty little hand, so cold and trembling, between his own, and answered :

"Are you very miserable, Isabel?"

"Not so very miserable, Dayne; but I wish it were otherwise."

His heart echoed the wish from its very core.

Justice Jason came forward, and announced that as the parties were all there they would proceed at once with the ceremony. Dayne turned and looked about him, and discovered in the dark recess of the little house a figure muffled up in a cloak and scarf. He could not see her face, but he knew that it was Mrs. Russell.

Stooping, he whispered : "Did you have any conversation with her, Isabel?"

"No. I begged her not to talk to me." And she instinctively clung closer to Dayne.

They turned and stood before the magistrate. The ceremony was brief. Isabel answered the questions put to her in an almost inaudible voice, and trembled and leaned heavily on Dayne.

The silence was distressing. It seemed they must hear her heart beat. When the last tones of the old man's voice died away, and he had solemnly pronounced them husband and wife, Dayne turned to his poor, frightened little wife and said :

"You will go back to the house with mother. I have to take Squire Jason home."

There were no congratulations nor happy expressions for their future. Mrs. Warwick came forward and put her arm about Isabel's waist, who covered her face and sobbed.

"You are a noble girl, Isabel. It pains me so much to have made you suffer."

"It is not your fault, Aunt Mary. You could not help it." And the voice sounded sweet in its pathos.

Mrs. Russell came forward, and said, in a low voice that made the others shiver :

"It is all over now. I shall never molest you again. Here is your book, Mrs. Warwick." She placed the book in Mrs. Warwick's hand and turned to leave. Dayne put his companion gently from him, and went nearer to the woman who had caused all this disaster.

"Mrs. Russell," he began politely, "you did not care to accept our word regarding the sincerity of our intentions. I hope you are satisfied?"

"I have expressed myself so."

"Then you will pardon me if I ask for further assurance of the safety of our secret at your hands. Will you take oath?"

At first she was silent. They could not see in the darkness what produced her silence, but it was of short duration. She assented to Dayne's wish, and Justice Jason administered the oath.

Mrs. Russell passed out into the night. Squire Jason came to the shrinking bride and took her hands in his, and said, in the kindest voice :

"I always like to look into the eyes of brides. It is so dark here, I cannot even see your face ; but I hope your life, dear child, may be bright and joyous, notwithstanding this dark hour. Be brave and patient and

kind. Fill your hours with charitable deeds; store your mind full of Christian thoughts, and then your life cannot but be pleasant. You have won a noble husband, one you may well be proud of. Some day, perhaps, it will be better to live openly as husband and wife. Then you will have an opportunity to show him what a prize he has won." The old man stopped, and would have drawn his hands away, but she grasped them, and rained kisses upon them.

"Dayne, it is customary to give the certificate to the wife. I presume you have no objection?"

"Not in the least, Squire. Give it to Isabel. It is, however, not probable we shall have need of it," Dayne said, with a sigh.

What a wedding! No flowers, but the wild roses that lay unnoticed, wet with dew, upon the garden fence. No music, save the ripple of the water that sounded mournfully sweet in the starlit night. No kisses of love, no congratulations—nothing that makes the wedding the crowning hour of womanhood.

Gloom, sadness, dead hopes, and regret were all that could be remembered of the marriage of these two.

The following morning Isabel was unable to rise. Florence sat by the bedside, regardless of the usual morning walk she was neglecting. When Mrs. Warwick had come to inquire why the young ladies did not come down to breakfast, and had been informed with utmost indifference that Isabel was not well, and that they would take some tea and toast in their room, Isabel turned her white face to Florence, and said, in a low whisper:

"Floss, I am going to tell you a secret, a terrible secret, mind, and you must promise me not to tell it,

promise you will never breathe one word of it to a living soul."

"I can readily promise you, Isabel, but, perhaps, you would better not tell it if it does not concern me."

"Oh, I must speak of it to some one; I should go mad if I brooded over it alone. You will never tell it, Florence?"

"I promise faithfully, Isabel, never to tell it," Florence answered.

"You will be shocked I know, it is so strange. I was married in the garden last night at 11 o'clock, to Dayne."

"Child, you are beside yourself, you were not married last night," Florence replied, decisively.

"But I was. I knew it would surprise you. Justice Jason married us," Isabel said, briefly, and immediately covered her face with her hands.

"Isabel, you were not out of your room last night, that I know of. You came in from the veranda damp with dew, don't you remember? and I asked you to lie down. You must have dreamed it, Isabel."

"No, Florence, I did not dream it. Dayne was on the veranda with me, and we agreed to be married at 11 o'clock, and we were. I cannot tell you why, but it had to be so."

"Where was I when you left the house?" asked Florence, seriously.

"Sound asleep. I kissed your face before I went."

"My little cousin, I am very much inclined to think you were dreaming. I can't believe that you could leave the room and return without waking me one time or the other. When did you come in?"

Isabel put her hand to her brow and stared in a dazed way before her, and replied, wonderingly :

“I cannot—why it is so strange—I cannot remember anything—but that we were married. I must have been only half conscious of my actions.”

“Was any one else there?” Florence asked, the corners of her mouth twitching threateningly. It seemed so ridiculous for Isabel to tell her this curious dream, and in such good faith too, it was almost amusing ; but not for worlds would she allow Isabel to perceive her disbelief ; it would do no harm for her to acquiesce until Isabel was fairly well, then they would speak of it again. To her question Isabel replied, vaguely :

“Yes—yes, others were there,” and Florence smiled, “but, Floss, I can’t remember anything about the service. I think I was only half alive.”

“I think so too,” Florence answered, demurely “but my poor little cousin, do not talk any more about it ; if you have had a wedding, I shall never forgive you for not taking me into your confidence.”

“No, we will let the subject rest. I could not tell you.”

A tap on the door put an end to their conversation. Jane entered with a most dainty breakfast for two, and Mrs. Warwick senior followed. She was quite distressed to find Isabel ill, and suggested that a doctor be summoned immediately, but to this the poor, pale little girl objected.

“No, grandma, I do not need medicine. I sat too long in the dewy night air ; it has made me feverish. I shall be better presently,” Isabel replied, clasping her feverish hand over that of Mrs. Warwick.

“I know what she wants, grandma,” Florence sug-

gested. "She wants to get out into the sunshine. She had dreary dreams, and this room seems peopled with the objects of her nightmare. I am going to bring her down by and by."

"Well, now, little doctor, don't be premature with your prescriptions and make her worse," Mrs. Warwick said, kindly.

"Oh, Florence is the sweetest nurse, grandma; I could not be so very ill when she is with me."

"Here are some books Dayne brought over. I don't know how the boy heard you were sick, but he came over and asked for the girls, and then handed these to me for Isabel. Perhaps he intended them for both of you, and sent them to Isabel after I told him she was ill."

When Mrs. Warwick left the room, Isabel said, with closed eyes, "Florence, do you think now that I am the victim of a dream?"

Florence's face turned crimson. She did not reply.

As the day wore on and the throbbing ceased in Isabel's temples, they brought her downstairs.

Florence watched Dayne closely when she believed herself unobserved. His face wore a serious air and would flush at the slightest reference to either himself or Isabel. Nevertheless, he bestowed his most courteous attention upon his wife. He gave her the freshest, sweetest roses, then walked to the window and sighed. She wished for music; he picked up his guitar and sang all her favorite songs. While he thumbed an idle accompaniment, Isabel dropped to sleep. Her shawl slipped from her shoulders and with the tenderest solicitude he replaced it so gently as not to disturb her. None of these things escaped Florence's eye. She was looking over a book of engravings with Walter, and assumed the

utmost indifference to her cousins, but her quick ear caught the tenderness in Dayne's voice and the sly glances she cast toward him were enough to assure her that his heart was ready to break.

The days passed without any unusual event transpiring. Isabel was rapidly convalescing, perhaps the expectation of soon meeting her mother (as they had received word that she would soon come on), had something to do with it; at all events she grew brighter and more cheerful and delighted her friends with her old serenity which for days had been sadly upset. One evening Florence was walking with her father about the garden. They had been talking very earnestly about something and Florence was very pale; on the contrary, however, her father's face was flushed and troubled. Evidently he had told her something very astonishing, for the expression of surprise on her countenance was quite foreign to her usually radiant face.

"But, papa, will they not have to have another ceremony?"

"Oh, yes; I have that all arranged. I have telegraphed for Phil to come down, and will give him a chance to redeem himself. He ought to have been here last night. I hope he won't add one more brick to his wall of sin. Poor misguided Phil."

"Papa, I wonder that you have any patience with him. I am sure the others would not if they knew."

"Perhaps not, darling, but we are all too ready to pounce upon the unfortunate. We don't help people up," Charles said.

"You can't say that of yourself, papa. Had it not been for you, uncle Phil would have been punished long ago."

"There he comes now. Darling, go to the house and give me a few moments with him?"

"Yes, papa. Bring him in when you are through your talk. Dayne is with Isabel." She said the last with a tremulous voice that was not lost upon her doting father.

She ran lightly toward the house and met Dayne coming out of the hall door, his hat slouched down over his eyes, and his whole attitude bespeaking sadness. When he met her great, brown eyes, he flushed guiltily and looked away. Ignoring the expression, she said gayly :

"Come, Dayne, and let me beat you at tennis." Before answering her he looked into the parlor and saw Walter Reynolds bending suspiciously near to Isabel. As Dayne looked he remembered that Isabel had whispered that morning : "For heaven's sake, Dayne, don't leave me alone with Walter!" and here he was sauntering thoughtlessly away and Isabel was subjected to the pain of the dreaded interview. No wonder he sighed, and looked away from the bright eyes at his side.

Florence, watching him keenly, mistook his glance for jealousy, and thoughtlessly said :

"Goodness, Dayne, where is your mind? You act like you were in love!"

"Evidently you are *not*, Florence, or you would be kind."

With a toss of her head she answered :

"Oh, I did not know! forgive me, Cousin Dayne," and turned to walk away. He grasped her arm before she had gone more than a few steps and stopped before her ere she had time to dash away the tears that were standing upon her face. "Tears? Oh, Florence, what for?"

But she darted away and ran to her room, and there in the solitude of the dear little chamber she cried as though her heart would break. Dayne was too miserable to see any one. He lighted a cigar and strolled away from the house, but he could not get away from that marriage nor from himself.

CHAPTER XXIV.

DISCLOSURES.

Oh smile as thou wert wont to smile
Before the weight of care
Had crushed thy heart, and for a while
Left nought but sorrow there.

“ISABEL,” Walter was saying, “I have remained a whole week over my time. I have lingered from day to day trying to persuade myself that you love me; but sometimes, Isabel, I think——”

“Walter, don’t, *please don’t!*” Isabel said.

“Don’t forbid me to speak. Let me tell you how entirely you fill my heart, how deeply and sincerely I love you. I would go away and leave you to determine by absence whether or not you love me, but, Isabel, I am too weak. I have waited as long as I can. Do tell me, Isabel, that you love me. End my suspense at once. Tell me that you will be my wife.”

Her face was colorless, and her hands nervously tied and untied the ribbons of her dress.

“I cannot,” she at length answered.

“Cannot? Why not, Isabel? Have I deceived myself? Do you not love me?”

“I cannot be your wife. Don’t ask me.”

"Isabel, there is something wrong here. I have seen it, but dared not ask what it is. But won't you tell me if your sickness was the result of cold, or is this mystery enveloping you?"

"I am helplessly enveloped." She covered her face with her hands, and trembled violently.

"Isabel, don't agitate yourself. I will not seek to know your secret. But tell me that you will be my wife; give me that hope. Oh, Isabel, do not send me away."

"You must not speak to me of love or marriage again, Walter. I have no right to love you, and I dare not marry you. Don't distress yourself and me by a repetition of this."

"But tell me," he persisted, "what is it that binds you? Can it not be removed?"

"Ah, no, Walter, it is immovable as fate," she said, wearily.

"What is it? Oh, Isabel, what separates us?"

"Disgrace!" She pronounced the word faintly, and hid her face.

"That cannot be. Your life has been as innocent and pure as a little child's, and the disgrace of someone else cannot divide us, my love. Ah, no, my darling, that cannot come between us."

"You do not understand, and I cannot tell you. Walter," she cried in despair; "if you ever loved me, leave me."

He seized her hands, pressed burning kisses upon them, and went away. She threw herself back in her chair and cried, just as Florence was crying upstairs, and Walter was walking restlessly and aimlessly about, just as Dayne was doing. On the opposite side of the

garden Philip and Charles Hayne were pacing to and fro in an argument that wrought them both up to the highest pitch of passion. Charlie was saying :

“ Well, Phil, I only thought it fair to give you a chance to reinstate yourself.”

“ You are very kind,” Philip answered, with covert sarcasm.

“ Phil,” cried Charles, exasperated beyond all endurance, “ do you know what the result of your villainy is ? ”

“ I do not know. But I presume you could inform me, as doubtless you have informed others.”

“ I could tell you, Philip ; but as to my having informed others, you know that I’ve not. Where would you be now if I had ? No ; you know well enough that your cowardly secret was safe with me,” Charles answered, quietly. And this was the answer Philip gave, in the most dogged fashion :

“ You are a sneaking old spy, Charlie, or you could not know so much about other folk’s business. How in the deuce did you find my little trick out, I’d like to know ? ”

“ You’ll know soon enough. And I want to tell you, Phil Warwich, I’m *not* a spy. If I were, your boy, whom you idolize, would not now be paying the price of his father’s folly.”

Philip’s face grew livid at mention of the boy he worshipped.

“ What has happened to my boy ? Tell me, in heaven’s name, what has happened to my boy ? ”

“ The worst possible thing has happened to him. He is passionately in love with Florence, as doubtless you know ; and to keep your name untarnished, and to

save the reputation of Lawrence's daughter Isabel, he married her."

"Dayne married? Oh, you don't mean it, Charlie. You are trying to frighten me," Philip replied, affrightedly.

"Well, if I am, I've succeeded. You're shaking like you had a chill. Don't falter now at the climax. You've done all the mischief yourself, and ought to be pretty well prepared for the consequences."

"Don't stand there preaching. Tell me what has happened to Dayne."

"I told you he had married Isabel, and ruined both their lives. Their marriage was private, and no one knows of it but your wife, Squire Jason, and Mrs. Russell."

"Mrs. Russell? What has she to do with it?"

"She demanded the marriage in payment for silence. You see, Phil, murder will out. She, in some way, possessed herself of a diary that you had kept in cipher, and, as you had indiscreetly told your thoughts to its pages, she discovered this trick you played Loll, and brought the book to Mary, and the result——" Charlie did not finish the sentence.

Philip was lying upon the ground, his face buried in his hands, and amid his cries and groans Charles caught these words:

"Mary knows it! I'm ruined! My wife, my wife!"

"Get up, Phil. That won't help you," was Charles' admonition. "You are wasting time and courage. There is too much for you to do to let your remorse master you this early."

In unaffected distress Philip replied: "What shall I do? I am ruined. I can't do anything."

"What did you expect to do when you played this infamous farce? You say you did it for revenge. How did you suppose your scheme would terminate?"

"I had not thought of it. I only wanted to do him a trick that would ultimately put him in my power."

"Well, you've not only done him a trick, but you have ruined your wife's happiness and sold your boy."

Philip was too distressed to answer. He was very pale, and Charles observed, for the first time, that he had aged rapidly, and that his hair was turning fast. He was not the handsome *debonnaire* Phil, who used to tyrannize over everybody and everything.

"I'll tell you, Phil, what you can do. It won't do for you to stay here if this thing is found out. The people in this vicinity will rise up against you, and the only thing is for you to get away."

"But my wife?" cried Philip.

"Take your wife with you," answered Charles.

"But there's Dayne, our only child."

"He is old enough to please himself. If he desires to follow you he can do so. Indeed, Phil, you must get away."

"Charlie, what is your composition, anyway?"

"My composition has nothing to do with getting you away. Lawrence and his wife will be here to-morrow, and whatever is to be done must be done quickly. You would best consult Mary."

Philip closed his eyes to shut out the light that seemed to shine from Mary's eyes, the good, true, little woman who had been his greatest joy in life. Now she must hate him, she must loath his name, turn from him in contempt for his perfidy.

He staggered rather than walked to the house. Mary

was indisposed, and had remained in her own room. Thither Philip went. Tapping gently, he was told to enter. Mary was lying on a couch, with her hair lying loosely over her pillow. She was pale and weary; her eyes were raised languidly to his face, and when they recognized him they opened wide in surprise, but were filled with gloom and regret. He stopped at the threshold, ashamed to enter the presence of this woman whom he had disgraced. She arose and went directly to him, saying, with an attempt at her natural brightness: "My dear husband, I am glad you have come."

"Glad are you, Mary? I was afraid to meet your truthful eyes. You know my wickedness, Mary, and you are unhappy, too; poor, dear, faithful wife. I am not worthy your love. I merit only your reproaches."

"I have no reproaches, Phil; it is not for me to do that; but oh, my husband, could you not foresee the trouble, the disgrace, and the pain?"

"Say what you will, Mary. I am a brute, I know."

"I cannot imagine you anything but the kindest husband. But, Phil, this wrong must be righted; you and I must do it even if we have to sacrifice every hope of happiness; this wrong must be righted, at the risk of everything else. I have done a most cowardly thing, Philip; so cowardly that I blush to think of it; but you cannot guess how frightened and pained I was, and all I thought of then was saving our good name, and in my cowardice I sacrificed Dayne to save you and me. I wish now that I had not done it. It would have been so much better to have waited."

"Would she have waited—Mrs. Russell? You see I have heard it, Mary?" Philip said, contritely.

"Who told you?" his wife asked, tremulously.

"Charlie Hayne told me, and, to add one more Quixotic caper to his long list of eccentricities, he offers to help me out of this foolhardy scrape by sending me off. What do you think of it?"

"He is noble and generous, but we will not run away from our folly; we will stay here and fight it out."

"That's philosophy, but don't you know, dear, that the consequences will be most dire?"

"Yes, I know it; but it were better to take the punishment at once than wear our lives out trying to escape it," she answered, resolutely.

"You are bound to put yourself in partnership with me in my crime, my love," said Philip, with tears of shame suffusing his eyes.

"I am assuredly in partnership with the punishment. That is inevitable, dear. Now listen: they will return to-morrow; do decide quickly, Phil, upon some course. They must have another ceremony, and the best plan will be for you to acknowledge the deception and take the consequences," Mary implored with her arms about his neck, and thus they talked for full half an hour, he essaying to find some means of escape, and she holding him to the yoke which she was so willing to help him carry.

Towards evening, when the subject had been discussed and almost exhausted between them, Mary said she would go and find Charlie, and they should abide by his decision. So, a few minutes later, Charlie and Dayne were springing up the steps towards Mary's room.

The meeting between father and son was constrained to embarrassment. Dayne had wondered if he could

overcome this revulsion of feeling toward his father sufficiently to meet him and assume a natural demeanor; but when he saw his proud parent humiliated to the dust, and knew that the eyes were downcast because they could not meet unflinchingly those of his son, the latter felt only too leniently inclined, and strove generously to disperse the fast falling gloom.

Philip turned to his wife for an introduction to the subject. He felt that he could not make his parched lips frame the words he would have spoken. Mary, ever on the alert for the comfort of those about her, saw at a glance her husband's trepidation, and came to the rescue.

"Charlie," she began. "Phil and I are perfectly willing to make any restitution in our power, but we don't know how to begin it. If we make an open confession it will entail any amount of pain upon all of us, and we cannot go away, Charlie, as you were kind enough to suggest; that would be useless folly. Will you tell us what to do?"

"Mary, you are a most deserving little woman, and I am only too sorry to see you suffer; but *they* have suffered so long, and now to bring them back to more pain seems hard, but right is right. How are they to have a ceremony proper, if they don't know that the other one was illegal?" Charlie asked.

"Oh, I don't know," Mary answered.

"And, again, this marriage between Dayne and Isabel——"

"Why, Uncle Charlie, how did you find that out!" Dayne cried, with consternation depicted on every feature.

"Never mind, my boy. This marriage cannot be

kept a secret long ; it must come out, and the whole thing will have to be disclosed after all. While we are all excited over the return of Loll and his wife, let's make a clean breast of it, Phil, and own up," Charlie said, with a side glance at the man addressed, who turned to them, with his face as white as death and his brow contracted with pain, and said :

"Charlie, you are right. We cannot hold up our heads again after it is known, but if we try to shirk it longer, it will eat our very souls away ; it has gnawed at mine, until I had lost all hope of peace. But I'll tell it to-morrow, Charlie, all, everything, and you will see that I willingly sacrifice myself as my atonement. I will tell it to-morrow."

CHAPTER XXV.

ADELE'S RETURN.

A bird sang in the orchard trees,
Sang every nodding flower awake,
Sang on as if its heart would break ;
The music rippled down the breeze,
And laughed across the clover bloom,
And seemed to bring the sweet perfume.

Within the shadows on my wall,
Imprisoned in a golden cell,
Another bird sang just as well,
It answered every joyous call,
And flooded all the house with song,
In mellow measures loud and long.

—D. E. O'Sullivan.

ON the following morning they were all astir early, and before noon the entire household was thrown into a perfect tumult of preparation and anticipation. The

day was a clear, sunshiny but crisp October day. The brown and golden leaves fluttered about the trees a moment and then fell one by one from the branches to the ground, as though expressing their joy and gladness and welcome by letting regret fall drop by drop. The birds lingered still, loath to fly away to their winter home until they had chirped a song of welcome to the home-returning wife. Little patches of gray clouds lurking in the horizon suddenly and fitfully scampered away, to leave the heavens blue and sweet for the canopy over her head. The chrysanthemums and gladiolus waved their pink and crimson heads proudly on either side of the walk, to make her pathway sweet, and the mellow apples dropped one by one to the ground, willing to be sacrificed to gratify her taste. Nature caught the contagion of enthusiasm from the members of the household, and lent all her beauty and stores to the gratification of the wife who had suffered more than her after years could compensate.

Isabel was on the *qui vive*, and, at the slightest rumbling of wheels over the ground, sprang to the window or ran out upon the porch to obtain a view of the road towards the station. Florence was more than ordinarily quiet; it was not her nature to cogitate deeply or in silence, but her conversation with her father the morning previous, during which he had explained all he knew concerning the marriage of Lawrence, had filled her mind with perplexing ideas, and while she was happy with the rest, she was wonderfully disturbed. Mrs. Warwick, senior, went about the house humming softly an old air. She did not often sing, but this morning it would seem that gladness refused to be restrained, and poured from her mother heart.

Amid the most exhilarating surroundings, the carriage, containing John Warwick and the reunited couple, drove up to the house. Lawrence sprang down and almost carried Adele to the door, where she was smothered with Isabel's kisses, caressed with Florence's arms, and bathed in good Mrs. Warwick's tears.

How gentle and kind they were to her! so anxious to put to flight the tears that their goodness drew from her appreciative heart, and Lawrence beamed upon her. He had thought he loved her long ago, when he led her to the altar in the ivy-grown church at Woodale, but in the fulness of his joy at having her once more at his side, he recalled those days and shivered at the luke-warm love which suffered him to be so easily robbed of his wife.

There are always so many questions to be asked before we can, after a long separation, enter into a proper channel of chat. The several absences had to be explained away. Philip and Mary had gone to the city, but would return that night. Charlie had walked over to Aunt Prue's, and must have become interested in one of her tales of Dick's illness and death, to which he never tired of listening.

Adele replied to the query regarding her father by saying that he had begun a picture, and desired to remain in New York until he had completed it.

The hours were flying rapidly, and Charlie had been at home some time, and yet he had not accomplished what he had hoped to do in that length of time. Adele had expressed so much pleasure at again seeing her husband's brother that Lawrence jocosely declared such proceedings would justify him in moving immediately into a separate house.

In the course of the afternoon, however, Charles found an opportunity to whisper to Lawrence that he desired to see Adele and himself alone. Accordingly Lawrence proposed to his wife a walk about the gardens before dinner, and the three set out together.

When they had gone so far that the golden brown shrubbery screened them from view, Charles began by saying :

“I brought you away from the house because what I have to tell you is a secret, known only to a few members of the family, and it will surprise and pain—perhaps anger you—so that I chose this spot, hoping to avoid intrusion.” He paused, because he was a poor conversationalist, and was really at a loss how to tell the tale he had begun, and in their wonder they could not even interrogate him. “Loll, if I tell this tale, I must begin at the beginning and rake up old scores; but let’s do it good-naturedly, and the part that seems villainous to you is the part I want you to forgive. Before I begin I want to ask you, why you never had any marriage certificate?”

Lawrence and his wife looked askance at each other, and the former exclaimed dubiously :

“Pon my soul, I never thought about it.”

“Nor I,” added Adele.

“Strange! Well, understand that your marriage certificate was filled out and duly signed, and is now in my possession, and I want to brush up your memory a little by asking you who drove for you that morning of the wedding?”

“Who drove? Why, poor old Dick,” Lawrence answered.

“No, he didn’t either, Loll.”

"Oh, but he did, Charlie; Dick drove," exclaimed Adele.

"Dick was in Memphis that day. I drove the carriage."

"*You?* You are jesting, Charlie."

"Indeed, I'm not. This is the way it was; and no matter how horrible my yarn may seem, don't get impatient, nor mad, because it all turned out right after all. Do you remember, Loll, the morning you and I sat over there on that bench and argued about Philip?"

"Yes, Charlie, I was heartily ashamed of the way I talked that morning. But really now, Charlie, I was right after all, was I not? Phil proved my friend."

Evasively, Charlie continued :

"Well, that was the morning of the accident in the woods. I met Phil down by the creek, and he asked me to help you get married. I accused him of hatching a plot against you, and the quarrel went from bad to worse till he got so mad we—well you remember the accident? I was at Aunt Prue's one night when Dick came home and repeated a conversation he had overheard, and it meant mischief for me. Phil didn't like me and intended to injure me. So, when I found trouble ahead, I did not want to take the trip that I had anticipated, but Aunt Prue declared I would bring grief to mother if I stayed here with Phil. So at Aunt Prue's suggestion, Dick and I compared our stature, and found but little difference. Dick took me to town, and we exchanged clothes; I went to a manufacturer of hair goods and got a mustache as nearly like Dick's was as possible, and got also a wash for my face that made me as brown as a berry. Aunt Prue declared that with my hat on, she could see but little difference between

Dick and me. Well, now comes the part that I am sorry to tell. I was loafing down by the creek one morning, and hearing Phil say something about hiring a preacher, I slipped up to the hedge and lay down; and while I lay there, Loll, before heaven, I heard Phil Warwick hire Cronie *to go to town and hire one of Cronie's chums to come to Woodale on the next morning, and perform a marriage service.*"

"Oh, Charlie!" Lawrence cried, and Adele covered her mouth with her handkerchief to repress the scream that threatened to escape.

"That is true, Della, but Cronie didn't go. After Phil went away, I told Cronie that Aunt Prue wanted some things from town, and if he would let me, I would get a fellow, as I knew lots of them that would be glad to come. So to keep Cronie out of sight we stowed him away at Aunt Prue's, and I went to town and got—not a chum—but a fully ordained minister; and if my story seems too hard to believe, here," he said, unfolding a paper, "is your certificate, with Mary Warwick and Charles Hayne as witnesses, and the Rev. John B. Lake, lives at——, —— Street, Mobile, and remembers the marriage as well as any of us."

Dead silence ensued. What else was fitting a narrative like this? For a few seconds not a sound broke the stillness about them, but at length a little sob came from Adele's direction, and, looking around, they found her crying in a most pathetic manner. She made a great effort to be calm, and cried as she clung to her husband's arm, "Lawrence, why don't you express your gratitude?" but Charles broke in hastily. "Oh, no, Della, that is not what I told it for; I was waiting for you to digest the information before I told you the

rest. Phil is very penitent, and as he has no idea that you are legally mar——”

“Does he not know of your intercession?” cried Lawrence, aghast.

“Not a word; he thinks you will have to have another ceremony, and I have, with Mary’s help, induced him to come and confess it all to you. That is why I have explained it first. I thought if he told it to you, and left you to imagine yourselves and Isabel disgraced, the consequences might be a scandal, and——”

“I can’t imagine, Charlie, what the consequences might have been, but they would have been terrible to him,” Lawrence cried with clenched teeth, and Adele said, in a horrified whisper, “I did not know a man could be so vile.”

“Well, Loll and Adele, it is all past. You are united again, and mother and father are happy, and don’t you think it will be better to forgive Phil, and let peace once more reign here, than to beget animosity, and arouse the whole vicinity to his wickedness?”

“Forgive him, Charlie? No! I won’t forgive him, though I will not make any fuss about it,” Lawrence exclaimed, hotly.

“I think, Loll, it would be more manly to forgive, and if you knew how it is telling upon Mary you would forgive him for her sake; she is perfectly wretched,” Charlie urged.

“Did Mary know of it?” asked Adele.

“Oh dear, no! not until a few days ago.”

“How did she find it out?” Lawrence inquired.

“That I will have to leave for another telling. You’d better forgive Philip, Loll.”

“But how can I forgive him such treachery? I can-

not realize it yet ; it is all like a horrible tale of fiction to me. Imagine, Charlie, if you can, the horror I should have felt at this knowledge, if it had been as he planned ! I cannot forgive him."

" You will think better of it. I'm sure your nature is too generous, Loll, to withhold pardon where it is sought for pardon's sake. Besides, you have your wife, and will now be happy. Phil is actually being consumed by remorse, and can't you let bygones be bygones, for the sake of mother and father, and our children ? Everybody must have his day of sorrow. You have had yours, and surely the family generally has endured enough to justify it in hoping for peace. If you refuse to make peace, and set an example of further strife, the entire family must again suffer. Mr. Moore forgave you, and to him your marriage was most distasteful. You forgave him, and yet you thought you could never forgive him for taking Adele away. We have daughters now, Loll. Need we make them any more miserable than necessary by inflicting all this disturbance upon their innocent minds ? Why won't you see this as I see it ? " Charlie was so intensely in earnest that he forgot his usual reticence, and was almost eloquent in his plea. Lawrence stood, leaning against a tree, his hands thrust into his pockets, his eyes fixed gloomily on the ground. He looked up at length, and said :

" Charlie, you are right. It would be shabby in me to refuse forgiveness after he has confessed a wrong of such long standing. But can you guess, Charlie, how bitter is the thought that, while I was trusting him, confiding in him, and giving into his keeping all that I treasured most, he should be practising upon me the

worst form of deception? Such villainy is not excusable. The more I think of it the more horrible it grows. To think that he could sit down at my table and break bread with me, believing that I was the ignorant victim of his treachery—it is quite beyond me. I never want to see him again, nor hear his voice. It is of no use, Charlie. It may seem cowardly or brutal in me to create the turmoil of which you speak, but I shall leave the house when he comes down." Saying this, he disengaged his arm from Adele's clasp and took a turn around a bed of frost-bitten geraniums. Charlie's face was clouded with disappointment; but he turned with a patient smile to Adele, and said, gently and hopefully:

"What does Adele think about it? Is Philip beyond pardon?" Her face did not change, until Lawrence turned and said: "Yes, Adele; do you think you could forgive such a heinous sin as this?" She raised her head and said:

"I have not been thinking of Philip at all. His sin is heinous enough, heaven knows; but Lawrence, Philip's crimes are not as abundant as Charlie's generosities. There, Charlie, you are blushing with pained modesty; but, believe me, I cannot, even in the monstrosity of Philip's deed, lose sight of your magnanimity. Of course we will forgive him. Do you not see, Lawrence, that the advantage is all on our side? Philip has his evil-doing to torture his conscience, and added to that is defeat. He is certainly being punished enough, without our assistance, and we have given Hayne Home so many anxious hours, and there have been so many years of sorrow, that we must lighten the hours with joy, so that our last days may be light and sunny, and our chil-

dren grow up happy. Lawrence, you cannot stand here by such a brother and refuse a plea that comes from a heart as void of selfishness as his. Philip shall be forgiven, and we shall all be very happy yet. Rather than brood over a cruel past, thank merciful heaven for sparing you."

Charlie grasped her hand, and exclaimed, in a husky voice: "Ah, Della, if we only had more women like you! I knew you would be sensible. How I thank you!"

Lawrence came up, and said, with great embarrassment: "Charlie, it may seem to you, if I retract now, that my wife's opinion has biased mine; but she has done so only inasmuch as she has pictured me in my proper light. I was so engrossed with thoughts of my own wrongs that I did not see that I owe you a debt that can never be paid in this world. But I see it now, Chad. Bless your old loyal soul, I will forgive Phil, and lend what little influence I can to redeeming him. We must not let this secret pass into other keeping. Mother and Philip's father must be spared this grief, We do all——"

"Yes, that's it, Loll. I knew you would not hold back when you had considered the amount of trouble you will save," Charlie exclaimed, joyfully, and added: "Shall we go into the house and have some music? The girls sing charmingly together."

"We will join you presently, Charlie. I am really more disturbed than I thought possible with my wife beside me. Ah, Charlie, I would divide my joy if it were possible! You deserve to be happy," Lawrence said warmly.

"I am happy," Charlie answered; but it was with a

sigh ; "and I am rich as a king in the possession of Florence."

"You are right, Charlie. I hope you will enjoy many years of happiness with her. She has been my chief joy." Saying which Lawrence offered Adele his arm, and they strolled through the barren garden, speaking in praise of the noble qualities that lay hidden beneath Charlie's plain exterior.

CHAPTER XXVI.

A MISUNDERSTANDING.

Alas ! I love, and must not say it,
My secret sweet I must not show,
I close mine eyes lest they betray me;
I close mine lips that none may know.

Yet can I hope to keep my secret
When all earth's creatures tell it so ?
They sing it, sigh it, and repeat it,
Till all the world must know my woe.

— *Lena Reed.*

DAYNE half sat and half lay on the ground that afternoon. His hat was set carelessly back on his fair brown hair, and he puffed lazily at his cigar. His face, however indolent his attitude, was not in repose. His eyes were clouded with gloom, and their steady, thoughtful stare betrayed a most unhappy spirit. He had wandered aimlessly about from one amusement to another, trying to kill time, since the night he had pledged his hand to Isabel, and those days had seemed like weeks, and he was wondering how he should manage to consume the days that were before him. He had loved

Florence ever since he could remember, and never had his heart strayed away from her an instant ; but he never knew how deeply, passionately, and hopelessly he loved her until now as he sat here alone, and realized the enormity of the sacrifice. "There is nothing," he thought, "that is so indissoluble as marriage. Great heavens ! why will people marry so rashly ? Poor little Isabel suffers just as much as I do. And this is the future that I have looked forward to. Florence, Florence, Florence!" Her name was all that had power to soothe him ; he repeated it to himself, wrote it in the soft earth about the flowers, and then chided himself for thinking of her at all, when he could never hope to be anything but Cousin Dayne to her.

A soft step on the grass beside him attracted his attention. He looked over his shoulder and there, but a few feet away, was Florence attempting to pass without observation.

Her face flushed crimson and she turned away, hence did not see the look of passionate pain in his eyes.

"Florence, will you not stop ? We have not had a quiet chat for days. Come and sit on this mound."

She could not reasonably refuse, so she put on her most *nonchalant* air and sat down beside him.

"Dayne, you are so very serious," she said, kindly, "what can you be thinking of ?"

"I was thinking of my future ; do you ever wonder what your future will be, Florence !" he asked indifferently.

"Yes," she replied, lightly, "but I did not know that men ever wondered about their future."

"Why should they not ?"

"I always imagined, Dayne, that life is pretty much as we make it, and as men have the ultimate advantage of us, I should think they might mould their lives almost to suit their taste."

"Some do, but the cases are rare. I presume most young ladies look forward principally to marriage as the one great climax of their lives?"

"Indeed they do not. At least not all of them," retorted Florence.

"Evidently you don't fancy that sentiment? Tell me then, my fair cousin, what the height of the average young lady's ambition is?" Dayne asked, with the least interest in the world.

"I think, Dayne, that sensible girls usually let the future take care of itself. There is so much in the present, both good and bad, that, if they do their advantages justice, they will find little time for the vain dreams you refer to. Men are generally not content to let well enough alone; they are always grasping and reaching and coveting."

"Oh, no, not the last named—always."

"Coveting? I did not say all men, I said the generality of men are always coveting (their neighbor's goods). Oh, yes, they are, you needn't shake your head, Dayne. Don't you covet *anything*, rank, riches, fame, or—or *anything*?" she asked, with just the least wistful gleam in her eyes.

"Yes, Florence, I do," he answered, with vehemence. "I am the most covetous fellow on the globe—just now. Not rank, nor riches, nor fame—none of these—but something that is denied me, something that I shall never possess; it is so hard. Oh, so hard, Florence,"

he cried, sullenly, "do you think Isabel loves Reynolds?"

She shrank as if a sudden blow had fallen upon her. If he had not been suffering so deeply himself he must have seen that the light had died out of her eyes, and left them cold and dazed. She was too proud to let him perceive the cold chill that his question had caused. She would make some kind of answer at all events, but her voice trembled perceptibly.

"I—I really don't know, Dayne. Should you mind, should you care so very much if she does, Cousin Dayne?" Her face, with its tenderness shining through every lineament, smote him sorely. He was tempted to say "No," but the thought occurred to him that if Isabel loved Reynolds, her marriage would be gall and wormwood to her, just as it was to him, and in his truthful heart he did not wish her any more pain than this loveless marriage would incur. It never occurred to him that his answer would kill all the life in the heart of the girl beside him. He was almost convinced that Florence knew of the marriage ; yet it disappointed him to believe that it was so, for he reasoned that girls were so transparent that she could not so effectually conceal her love for him, if she felt any.

"Tell me, Dayne, we are cousins you know, surely you can trust me?" And he raised her hand to his lips, and answered :

"Florence, Isabel is my wife," and the pained tone indicated only disappointment in his wife. Because she started he thought he had surprised her with this piece of information. Her eyes filled with horror. Could he be learning to love Isabel? Was his marriage not a grief to him after all? He must be

jealous of Reynolds. Such ideas swept in quick confusion through her mind. How she suffered with that hot, scorching passion flaming like a great fire in her heart ; love for this man who told her deliberately the secret of his life, and asked her if she thought his wife loved another !

“ Surely, Florence,” he said, “ you knew this ? I cannot have been so mistaken in your manner ; you have given me every opportunity to treat Isabel as my wife ; you have even tried, in your sweet, maidenly adroitness, to stand between Walter and Isabel, to prevent her being exposed to an offer of his love. I have seen it all, Florence, and I cannot tell you how I appreciate it, how humbly I thank you for it. Did you not know it, Florence ? ” he asked, seriously.

“ Yes ; Isabel told me the next morning. I could but think that she dreamed it ; but you seem to understand each other.”

“ Yes, we understand each other. Florence, can you not advise us or tell us what to do ? Do you approve of this secrecy, or do you think we ought to openly confess our marriage and live like other people. Isabel will never love me and will always be miserable, but I hope not more so than she is now. What shall we do ? ”

“ Don’t ask me, Dayne, I am not capable of advising. But, Dayne — ” she stopped suddenly, and tried to draw her hand away.

“ What, Florence—what would you have said ? Florence, what do I see in your face ? Do you—great— ”

“ Let go my hand,” she cried, vehemently, and, jerking her hand from his warm clasp, darted over the lawn to the house, leaving Dayne sitting looking after her

with a most bewildered stare. He slowly arose to his feet and walked away. "The prize I coveted is mine, and yet I dare not touch it. Oh, foolish, unhappy father! you sowed the seed, and we must reap the harvest."

CHAPTER XXVII.

A CONFESSION.

Let me go back, with sad, repentant hands,
Gather the unkind words my lips have said,
And bid me walk the years though on scorching sands
But say to me their sting is lost and dead.

Let all my fair days die, but those I marred,
With selfishness and sin—I humbly ask
To have them back, unwounded and unscarred,
To live them better, this to be my task.

Canst thou not wait, but now, O hurrying years,
E'en while I lay at thy swift-going feet
Atonement for the past, of prayers and tears,
That of my cup of rue shall be some sweet ?

—*S. B. McManus.*

THAT day was never forgotten. The afternoon sun waned and sank lazily down in his western cot, and the purple twilight settled in a dreamy haze over the fields. The evening was cool, and Mrs. Warwich had ordered a fire made in the grate in the large parlor. They were grouped about the fire, all but poor disconsolate Walter Reynolds, who had gone back to the city with all his hopes crushed out of his heart. He had loved Isabel very dearly, and had built all his future upon marriage with her, and this was his reality.

Philip and his wife had not returned, but no one felt the loss so keenly as he would have done, had there not been this mystery pending. But they had music and cards and the happiest and purest conversation. Dayne made the most vigorous efforts to talk to Florence, and, as though nothing unusual had ever occurred, she laughed and chatted, sang her brightest songs, played her maddest gallops, and withal was so irresistible that Dayne began to wonder if he had not been mistaken after all. He was wretchedly unhappy ; he engaged listlessly in the pursuits of the hour, and though seemingly interested in everything about him, he saw nothing but the changeable Florence, heard nothing but her voice, and felt nothing but her presence.

The morning following was a beautiful one, with nature's intoxicating sweets all aglow.

After breakfast was over Dayne and his cousins went out for a canter ; they had not been gone long when Philip and Mary Warwick came. Whatever resentment Lawrence and his wife might have felt toward this unhappy couple, melted instantly with the first glance at their woeful countenances and their discomfiture. They had both suffered so keenly that it could not do otherwise than depict itself on their faces. The thirty minutes that they occupied in the interchange of pleasantries, customary after so long a separation, were thirty tortures to both Philip and Mary. Perhaps the latter suffered even more than Philip, for her desire to make this error right was actuated by a purely conscientious desire to atone for so grievous an offense, while his was more through fear than anything else ; but to do him justice, it must be acknowledged that he was seriously anxious for the anticipated interview to be held immediately and

ended. Adele both gladdened and pained their hearts by remarking their son's remarkably fine appearance: "I do not think, Philip, that I have ever been so impressed with a young man's face since I was young as I am with Dayne's. He is surely capable of great actions." Mary sighed, remembering that Dayne had sacrificed his own happiness to hide the secret of his father's life; and Philip wondered what Adele would think when she should hear that she had unwittingly praised her son-in-law.

It seemed that Lawrence could not permit Adele out of his sight. When she was asked to go and look at a new flower, or consult with the young ladies upon subjects of importance to them, Lawrence followed with all the alacrity of a boy of twelve. This was amusing to good John Warwick, who, now that the pain and trouble was over, believed in leaving it behind and enjoying only the manifold sweets of the present, nevertheless he sighed deeply sometimes, remembering that they had lost all their best years in sorrow and their happiness now would seem only too brief at best.

The small clock over the mantel rang out the hour of twelve. Philip arose from his chair and approaching Lawrence, timidly and shrinkingly, said, in an undertone:

"Lawrence, I have something to say to you this morning, but I cannot say it in here; the room would suffocate me. Let us all go out upon the lawn. Mary," he said, turning to his wife, "bring Adele."

They all sauntered out together. If the readers who have no sympathy for Philip will pause to consider the enormity of his crime, and the amount of courage it required to confess his wickedness, they must invest

him with a due amount of heroism. As a general thing it is hard enough to acknowledge a wrong when accused, but it is doubly hard to make a confession gratuitously. Quaking with apprehension, he turned his haggard face toward them, and without one appeal to Mary for help, or to the wronged for mercy he began the account of his crime against them. And this is how the proud, disdainful Philip Warwick told his tale :

“ I cannot expect anything but curses from you after you have heard my story. I know how pained you will be. I offer no excuse. My only reason for the deed was spite and hatred. I did it hoping that some day you would suffer for it, and now that the day is come I believe that I am suffering more this minute than you will suffer, for you have not, knowingly, committed a crime, and I have. Adele,” he said, turning his handsome eyes to her face, “ can you bear a great shock ? ”

“ I believe so, Philip,” Adele answered. But, nevertheless, the anticipated horror of listening to a recital of this disgusting deception made her color forsake her, and caused her limbs to tremble threateningly. She wondered if she could possibly hear it. Should she not cry out in the midst of it, and beg him to stop ? She felt that she could not listen calmly. But his voice was falling on her ears. He was talking, evidently to her. What was he saying ?

“ It will be the severest shock you have ever experienced. Remember, I warn you ; it is worse than being separated from your husband, thousands of times worse, for it is entailed with sin and disgrace. Your marriage was no marriage at all, Lawrence. The man who acted

the *rôle* of clergyman was no clergyman, but a mercenary fellow from town, who did the work for \$30; he was not a minister."

Philip stood with bowed head and hands clasped in the most penitent attitude. Mary had expected an outburst of passion from Lawrence, and the most pitiful sorrow from Adele. She stood before them, her eyes chained to their faces, which were white, but, for that, were perfectly the same that they had been before Philip's recital. Perhaps they were sterner in expression, but that was all.

"Phil," Lawrence said, with an unsteady voice, "could you possibly do such a thing when I had trusted to your hands the most sacred thing that is given us—a woman's honor? Could you risk the fatal consequences that must follow an exposure of your crime? Had you thought of the probability of your disgrace shortening your poor old father's life? Did you forget that your tender, innocent wife would suffer all the shame that you must suffer? Had you no self-respect, no honor, no conscience? Why did you do it, Philip?"

"I—I hated you," Philip said, with sinking countenance.

"For what?" Lawrence asked.

"For being the son of my father's wife."

The silence that followed this speech was so intense that each one could have cried out in pain.

"Phil"—Lawrence laid his hand on Philip's shoulder—"is this all? Did you have no other motive in hating me so? Once you—" He was interrupted by Philip, who hastened to say:

"I know what you would say. That once I hoped

to win Adele. That is true. But, believe me, Loll, since I first knew Mary I ceased to cherish the slightest hope of such a union. That had nothing whatever to do with my wickedness."

"There are two sides to your nature, Philip. The good all concentrates in your love for your wife. The bad has, unfortunately, centred in your antagonism toward me; but when you played your game, Phil, you did not play it right. Is this all you have done, Philip?"

"I have not done what I might have done. I could have saved you this separation had I chosen. I did not do anything to further it, only to keep silence. Yes, I did, too, Lawrence. I sent the picture and those papers to Frederic Moore." Lawrence felt Adele cringe, and put his arm about her to steady her.

"You did? And where did you get them?"

"I took them from your pocket as you lay unconscious at mother's."

Lawrence's answer was a groan; he turned his face away and looked up and down the garden walk. He was not prepared to forgive so much. This little theft was so treacherously vile, that, hard as he had fought to control his anger, he feared that it must burst out afresh now. Adele could not trust herself to speak; and there they stood, one meditating deeply and conscientiously, the other three gazing one on the other in mute appeal.

"And this is what I trusted you for—to ruin my wife, who would rather have died than sully her fair name, and to make my child a thing loathed and despised? Where was your manhood, Philip?"

"I thought of nothing then but spoiling your life, the

life that your mother had thrust between me and my father's money."

"Your father's money? Did you begrudge the food and shelter he gave me until I came of age?" cried Lawrence, in disgust.

"That is not it. He told me once that if I were not kind to your mother and you, I should be disinherited and all his wealth should go to you. I have mistreated and deceived you all your life, and I must suffer the consequences if my father finds me out, for he will keep his word?"

"Then why have you mistreated me, knowing that such consequences must follow?"

"You were a favorite everywhere; one had only to see you to love you. My father loved you as every one else did, and I was always regarded as your inferior. The true secret of my wickedness, Lawrence, was my jealousy." Philip was white. There was a dumb despair in his eyes that smote his hearers, and Lawrence, thoughtful always of the comfort of those about him, was even now pitying the man before him.

"One thing more, Phil. You have told me how much sorrow you have caused and why you caused it; will you tell me now why you confess it? You know perfectly well, Philip, that if this were known the law would deal most severely with you. After all these years, why tell it now and expose yourself to lawful punishment?"

"You have never committed a wrong, Lawrence, so you cannot comprehend the scourging remorse inflicts. It never was my nature to be penitent, and it is humiliating to my pride to do it now; but I confess all my

wrong-doing to you, Lawrence, first, because I have grown restless and nervous from dread of its consequences, and because my wife has aroused the better part of me to a sense of my unworthiness. Lawrence, I am not so weak as to suppose you can forgive me. I do not deserve it, and do not ask it. I ought to be and am willing to accept any punishment that you choose to inflict upon me, but I only ask leniency for Mary's sake and Dayne's. They have done nothing dishonorable, and yet the punishment falls heavily upon them. For their sakes I ask your leniency, and I will do anything in my power to atone for this great wrong I have done you. What shall you do, Lawrence?" And the pain in his eyes hurt Lawrence more than any words could have done. He was the very personification of despair. Lawrence looked at him in sheer pity. After regarding him quietly for a time, he began :

" Philip, I am sure you must have expected that I would accept this information amid loud protestations and wrathful ejaculations. The fact is I had heard all this before. I heard it yesterday, and I tell you candidly that if you had surprised me with this information, I should most likely have done something that could not be undone. I was prepared to forgive some things, but I must say you have lain too much at my feet, and it is hard to forgive it as it is. But I can afford to be generous, Philip, inasmuch as you were beaten in your own game. Cronie never went to the city at all that night for the minister." Philip's face was a marvel of dismay. " Brother Charlie hired the clergyman." Philip gasped his surprise. " Dick Turner did not drive for us that morning. Charlie was the coachman, and here is the

certificate of our marriage, with your wife's name as one witness and Charlie's—not Dick's—as the other."

Philip threw up his hands, and said, "Thank God," and Mary fainted dead away from her deep gratitude.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

FACING FATE.

Sad the life is of a woman
Stranded on a loveless shore,
And my heart, for it is human,
Is with deepest pity sore,
And in spite of balm, is bleeding
For the loved, unloving eyes,
That so hopeless gaze, unheeding
Where her dreary future lies.

—Richard Lew Dawson.

"ISABEL, will you walk with me this morning? There are certain subjects I think it best for us to discuss before we part, and this is our last opportunity."

"I will be with you in one moment," she replied kindly. She came out directly, equipped for her walk. Her eyes were not as bright as usual, and her smiles were less sunny than they had been. Every action was listless and weary; her whole manner told of a despairing resignation. Poor Isabel! She did not look like a young wife preparing for a *tête-à-tête* with her husband.

She joined Dayne at the gate which he held open respectfully for her to pass through. When they had crossed the road, and turned their faces in the direction of the forest path, Dayne took her white parasol and

held it protectingly over her, for the sun had burst out warmly that day. Presently Dayne said: "Isabel, there is no use in us affecting a sentiment we do not feel. I need not tell you, however, how deep my esteem for you is, but it is not the feeling a man should have for his wife, and it is useless for me to pretend to ignore your indifference toward me; nevertheless, Isabel, I have come here to make a proposition to you, and I beg you to make a conscientious decision. I leave it all to you."

"Pray name it, Dayne; it could not make matters much worse. I shall be pleased to listen."

"I slept so little last night that I had an abundance of time to reflect on the little drama that we are enacting, and I have arrived at the very decided conclusion that something must be done. Your mother has had her day of sorrow, and it is time the sun peeped out from behind her life clouds a little; but Isabel, she will grieve herself to death if you continue to wear this white, sad face and these melancholy eyes all the time, and I would suggest that you do one of two things. You do not care for me, but you are my wife, and as such I am bound to protect you the best I can. I will be kind and gentle with you, and you will have no complaint to make of my forgetfulness of my duty toward you if you will go away with me from here as my wife, and live with me as such. Remember, Isabel, I do not ask you to do this, I only make this proposition to you. I am going away Saturday morning with father and mother, and if you can consent to go with me, we will confess our marriage to your mother and they need never know that it was to pay the price of their honor; we will be as cheerful as possible until we get away, and then, Isabel,

we will have to trust to time and patience for the rest."

"I must admit that all you say is sensible and true. I shall never hope to be happy, Dayne, but I am sure that the esteem I have for you would enable me to live very pleasantly with you, and as for you, Dayne, I hope I shall be able to at least make you comfortable. We certainly cannot make our marriage any more irksome than it is now; so if you think you will not regret the compact, I am perfectly willing to acknowledge our marriage and stare destiny in the face. You need not be alarmed about me, Dayne, I may have a white face, but I shall be stronger than you think." Dayne looked at her admiringly.

"You are a brave little girl, Isabel. Then since we are to begin life as the two sensible people we hope to become, do you not think we ought to confess our relation at once?"

"I am sure we ought. Dear me! I wonder if Mrs. Russell will be happy after all her scheming? Cora is so sweet and simple I am sure she would be humiliated to know what a cruel thing her mother had done."

The ill-fated pair retraced their steps a half hour later, with their arrangements made ready to put into effect immediately.

They parted at the door with these words:

"Go soon, Dayne, I can tell it much better in your absence, and when you have prepared a place for me, I will come."

"I shall go at noon; you may tell them as soon as you wish, and I will write you advising you when I shall come for you. Good-bye, Isabel, God bless your good heart."

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"Florence, Dayne and I have exchanged views and arrived at the same conclusion regarding our marriage."

"Have you, Isabel? Is that the reason Dayne went away?"

"We have not concluded to separate; on the contrary we are going to confess our marriage and live together."

"*Isabel!*" was all Florence could gasp.

"Why not?" We are irrevocably bound to each other, and we may as well be brave and face our fate, though it is hard. Dayne is so good to me I am sure I shall learn to like him very much."

Florence's heart almost burst with pain. Her voice was very faint as she asked: "And when are you going to tell your mother of this?"

"Whenever you will go with me. I want you there to cheer me with your brightest smile. Oh, Florence, I trust your sweet life will never present such a picture to you as mine does. It is so very sad, is it not, Florence?"

"It seems so now, dear, but do you know, Isabel, that there never has been a cloud in my life so dark that I could not see a little of the silver lining peeping out? And I feel this will be so in your case. If you will but look at the best part of the picture, and not even stop to sigh over the dark side, I am sure you will not feel so dreary."

"But, my dear Floss, hopeful as you are you must certainly possess foresight enough to see this thing as it really is——"

"Yes, I think I see it more plainly than you do; pardon the interruption and finish your remark."

"This is the question, dear, Dayne does not love me—"

"Are you very sure of that, Isabel?" Floss asked, wistfully.

"Sure of it? indeed I am. Why, only this morning, Florence, he told me in the kindest way possible, that he did not care for me as husbands should care for their wives, and that is not much like love, is it? Florence," she continued, cautiously, "I have deplored this marriage for my own sake, heaven knows, but in addition to that I am tormented with a conviction that you are suffering from it too. Be candid with me, cousin, did you not care a little for Dayne?"

Floss looked straight before her, but made no sign until Isabel said :

"You are not offended, are you, Floss?"

"Oh, no." Then dreamily, "Isabel, I have a great mind to tell you something. Can you promise the most faithful secrecy?"

"How can you ask? You know I will never reveal a confidence from you."

"You will not tell Dayne until I give you permission?"

"My dear, Dayne and I have agreed to be kind to each other, but that does not include all of the elements of friendship." And Florence said, "I must ask you first to let me see your marriage certificate." Isabel passed her hand over her brow thoughtfully.

"My marriage certificate? Let me see! I surely had one, but I can't remember. Why, really, I don't remember to have ever had any."

"Oh, dear! You must have had a certificate. The minister always supplies the bride with a proof of her marriage," Floss said, warmly.

"Well, I really cannot remember anything about mine."

"That is because I have kept it so carefully for you, Isabel, and now let me tell you plainly and briefly, Isabel, that you are no more Dayne Warwick's wife than that post is."

"Florence, how do you know? Was the marriage not perfectly legal?"

"Oh, yes, the marriage was legal."

"If you are in your right mind, Florence, tell me what you mean." Florence could not repress a smile.

"I do not think my mind is the least bit upset. Listen, darling. While you lay upstairs in a direful state of delirium, that night *I went to the arbor and married Dayne.*"

"Florence," Isabel cried, grasping the lithe shoulder. "Tell me the truth."

"I have told you the truth, before heaven. I am Dayne's wife, and you are free."

Isabel sank back upon a seat and covered her face and whispered, "Just heaven, reward this noble girl." A voice beside her caused them to start in embarrassed surprise; but Floss had no sooner looked into the beloved face than she threw her arms about his neck, saying eagerly, with a slight tone of distress:

"Oh, papa, you did not hear, did you?"

Charles Hayne looked disappointed, but replied, kindly:

"No, my child, I did not hear; but surely you have said nothing to distress Isabel to tears?"

Isabel looked up, her eyes shining through the silvery mist of unshed tears, and replied:

"No, no, Uncle Charlie, only glad tears. I want you

to know that she is the dearest, noblest girl, and could never do anything to distress me," Isabel cried delightedly.

Afterward Florence turned to Isabel, saying, "Now that you are no longer implicated, you will not object to my telling papa about this? I do not want to have a secret from him so soon."

"Tell him by all means, Floss. Do not keep it a day."

Whereupon Floss laid her pretty white hands upon her father's arm and said, timidly :

"Papa, one night I was lying on the couch by our window that opens out upon the balcony, and in a half-dream I heard Dayne telling Isabel that some woman had them in her power, and that there was no escape but for them to marry. I heard him promise to be good and true to her; and in the most loyal fashion he arranged to meet her that night in the arbor and have Justice Jason marry them. I heard it all, yet could understand but one thing, and that was that Uncle Philip had done something dishonorable and their marriage was to cancel it.

"As soon as I realized that I was eavesdropping, I got up and started to go away, but at that very moment Isabel stepped through the window into the darkened chamber, and said, 'God save me from this unhappy fate. I am so young,' and then, papa, the poor girl fell heavily on the carpet in a dead faint. I ran down stairs for help and saw our Jane standing at the gate looking at a rose bush that was near. You know, papa, it does not take me long to make up my mind to do a thing?"

"I know you are a spry little kitten," Charles said,

patting her shoulder, for which she flashed him her brightest smile.

“Well,” she continued, “I ran to Jane, and told her to come as quickly as possible and help me with Isabel, so that no one need know anything about it, and promised to explain it all after we had restored her. We worked hard and long to bring her back to consciousness, and finally succeeded, and then she tried to talk and tell us something, but we would not listen, and forbade her to excite herself, and all we allowed her to say was: ‘Well, but Florence, I must be there at eleven o’clock;’ and we told her it was a long, long time until eleven o’clock, and if she would be real quiet we would help her. She moaned and cried: ‘Oh, help me,’ and ‘Someone save me;’ so that I could no longer withstand it, and I mentally resolved to save her. But I was so afraid that she would tell Jane everything, or try to get out, that I grew almost desperate, and finally asked Jane if she could not suggest something that would produce a mild sleep or a harmless stupor, and, after ransacking her mind awhile, she remembered a bottle of medicine that had been given to grandpa when he was suffering from neuralgia. I gave it to Isabel myself, fearing that Jane’s trembling hands might let fall one drop too many. Just as soon as Isabel was sleeping quietly, I slipped out of the house and went around to the stables. I did not wait to put a saddle on the pony, and did not dare ask Tim, so I flung a carriage robe across his back and climbed up; and, oh how I flew through the darkness!” Charles was curious to know where she went on horseback, as the arbor was only across the creek, and could not well be reached save on foot; but he did not interrupt her.

She was fairly radiant with earnestness. Isabel looked dreamily beyond her companions, who stood beside her.

“I went straight to Justice Jason, and rang the bell of his library door. You know, all of his family are away, so I was not afraid of being interrupted by them. I told him about this unfortunate affair, and he listened kindly. I did not mention any names but Dayne’s and ours,” touching Isabel’s shoulders, “and asked his help. At first he was quite unwilling to assist me. He had a great horror of doing anything that seemed tainted with deception. He argued that, in either case, it was binding one woman to free another, and that the whole thing was ruinous to the happiness and prosperity of the family. He urged that the proper method would be to let the woman do her worst; but I would not hear of it. I persisted and begged until I had about given up in despair, when we detected the faint approach of wheels. For a minute, papa, I think I was nearly beside myself with grief and disappointment. After all my efforts to save Isabel I should fail. It was certainly enough to distract one. Whether it was my evident grief, or that he began to think I was right, I don’t know; but he eventually yielded the point, and, promising to do as I wished, sent me away nearly intoxicated with joy.”

Having spoken thus far her voice began to grow weaker, and her fingers worked nervously on the black sleeve of her father’s coat. The task had not seemed so limitless until now that she had reached the climax of her narrative, and saw the questioning glances bestowed upon her. Confusion and mortification took possession of her, and to her it appeared that her audi-

tors must mentally remark it, but they did not. Words were too weak to frame Isabel's thoughts, and as for Charles, he would have sacrificed much to have been able to manifest his admiration for his brave little girl. He took her hands kindly in his own, and giving them the most assuring pressure, said, in unusually softened tones :

"You have evidently saved Isabel from the marriage; but how? Tell us what you asked of Justice Jason."

"What I asked of him was that, in filling out the license and certificates, my name be placed there instead of Isabel's," she replied with burning blushes.

"And he did it?" her father asked, timidly.

"Yes," she replied, with downcast eyes.

He took her in his arms and stroked her hair. No one spoke for a few seconds. Charles was the first to break the silence.

"Then, my child," he said, with gathering moisture in his eyes, "you are Dayne's wife, and I have no daughter after all."

"Oh, papa," she implored, "do not say that. I am just as much your daughter as ever, and I shall never leave you, papa, never!"

"Ah, dear little girl, it was a selfish thought. Why should I complain of giving you to another while Heaven lets me see your face? I shall not regret, dear, that Dayne has won you, for, in a measure, I am rejoiced that it is so. When this unfortunate disaster is righted we will all be very happy to——" Isabel sprang up, crying :

"Uncle Charlie, this marriage must not be known. It is loyal and great in Florence to have saved me from such an unhappy position, and I shall feel forever in-

debted to her; but the others must still believe that I am Dayne's wife. No one must know that this has happened. Oh, Uncle Charlie, you do not know how much misery you will occasion if you insist upon making known this marriage."

"My dear child, you do not understand. For your own sake and those——"

"I do understand, Uncle Charlie. It is you who do not. Pray do not betray me. I shall be more miserable than ever knowing that my salvation is mamma's ruin," she cried, covering her face with her hands.

"Isabel, you are taking this too seriously. I know how unhappy you are, dear child. You made a noble sacrifice when you gave yourself to Dayne to save your mother; but, my dear, let me assure you there was no occasion for that stealthy marriage. If I had only been here it would not have happened, perhaps. Your mother's marriage was a legal one, as much so as ever a marriage was. I have not time to explain it, but Florence may do so."

"Uncle Charlie, can you prove her marriage legal?" Isabel cried, with a face whiter than chalk.

"Yes, Isabel, I can prove it. You poor, suffering girl, had I known sooner of Florence's intercession I should have hastened to relieve you; but I did not wish to interfere until you had perfected your arrangements with Dayne. Now, I would suggest that you confess your little escapade to your parents, Isabel. They are the ones to confide in. Go with Florence and hear an explanation of your mother's marriage, and I shall go to Mrs. Russell and explain to her the uselessness of her scheme. Don't look so surprised, child. You should be dancing with joy," he exclaimed, believing

that she was going to break down at the joyous information.

"I cannot believe it. Oh, I hope it is not a dream!" Isabel exclaimed.

"No, it is not a dream, Isabel. Come with me and I will explain it all away," Florence said, drawing Isabel's arm within her own, and, turning with a fond smile towards her father, she sang, softly :

"For hope still whispers low and sweet
We may be happy yet."

"Yes, sweet child, when I see you happy I shall be so, too," he answered ; and had turned to leave the garden when Florence laid a detaining hand on his arm.

"Well, what now, Florence?" he asked, tenderly.

"I wish to say, papa, that, if you are willing, I should prefer that Dayne does not hear of my part in the marriage. That is, I do not wish him to know that I am—an unacknowledged wife."

"But you will be *acknowledged* very shortly, after he is made aware that you occupy this strange position," Charles replied.

"Certainly," she reiterated. "Dayne would never allow me to feel that I had done a rash thing ; but I don't want him to know it yet."

"Florence, I am positive that he will be less miserable if he knows the tide of this arrangement. Would you not prefer to make him happy and relieve his mind as you have done Isabel's?"

"Yes ; but what I wish is this : He might be informed that his marriage is set aside, without knowing that I had anything to do with it. If his curiosity is so

consuming, let him come home and find out how it happened. May I do this, papa, dear?" she asked, with her face wreathed in smiles and blushes.

"Well, sly puss, you have the advantage. I am not well trained in such delicate matters as that of managing young ladies, so I might as well yield gracefully, since yielding will be the inevitable result. But will you not let me do this alone, Florence? I think I can effect your desire more completely than you could," Charles asserted.

"You will let him know that, so far as Isabel is concerned, he is free, but my name shall not be mentioned?" she queried.

"Exactly," was the quiet rejoinder.

"Well, then, papa, I will leave it to you. There, I must go to Isabel. Good-bye, you dearest of fathers." He watched them out of sight, and a fullness came into his heart when he remembered that he had found her but to lose her.

He did not go to Mrs. Russell's, owing to an appointment which called him to the village in half an hour.

CHAPTER XXIX.

BACK TO THE CITY.

Knee-deep in the topaz chestnut leaves, I nestle toward the place
Where the pert and upright rabbit sits, washing her innocent face,
Song of the quivering culms and osiers! I am wading again, in truth,
Knee-deep in the stream of Memory that flows from the land of Youth.

—*Robert McIntyre.*

ISABEL and Florence strolled leisurely through the orchard and crossed over the pretty bridge that spanned the shallow creek, and entered the arbor where the strange marriage had occurred so short a time before.

Prudence was gathering seeds from her flowering stalks in the garden near by, and came immediately to meet the young ladies when she spied them.

“Good-morning, Aunt Prue. Has not Jack Frost spoiled all of your seeds, or does he meddle with such well-developed specimens?” Florence said, brightly.

“Some uv em are ‘bout spilt; but I’m a-gatherin jest a few that’s left. My flowers hain’t done well sense Dick died. Dick wus powerful fond o’ flowers, an tended ‘em right smart.”

“Poor Dick. Mentioning him reminds me that papa has told me the circumstances pertaining to Uncle Lawrence’s marriage, and said you were well acquainted with the details. He has also told me that Dick left some papers which explain the circumstances. Would you mind giving the papers to me, Aunt Prue?”

"I wouldn't min' givin' em to you, Florence, but may be yer pa haint ready fer 'em. He told me ter keep 'em till he asked fur 'em, an he ain't never asked yit."

"That is because he has settled some personal matters without them, Aunt Prue. We have been having very unhappy times at our house, and instead of all being so happy, as we thought we should be, we are, or have been, miserable," Florence said, disconsolately.

"Why, I thought ye were all as happy as larks, now that ye're gittin' all settled like. What's the matter?"

"Well, in the first place, Mrs. Russell found out that Uncle Philip had done this thing, and came to Aunt Mary and threatened her with disgrace if she did not accede to certain wishes. Aunt Mary yielded, and in doing so made a serious mistake which, fortunately, did not result as seriously as they had feared ; but Isabel is in perfect ignorance of the circumstances so far as papa and Dick were concerned, and I have brought her over here to enlighten her. I thought the papers would be more explicit than my recital. That is why I asked for them."

"Well, ye shall have 'em, Flossie. I take a heap o' comfort out uv them papers, cause they wus all Dick had to give me. He gave 'em to me just before he died, and seems like I ken allus see him when I read them papers."

Aunt Prue wiped away a few glistening drops from her face, and Florence answered :

"Yes, Dick was an exceptionally fine man. It is very sad that he was called away so soon."

"Yes, it is sad," sighed Prudence. Isabel interrupted,

"But Dick cherished the same sweet faith that you do, Auntie, and you must console yourself with the assur-

ance of a future union. That ought to be comforting."

"'Tis mighty comfortin', an' I'm glad to hear you speak that way, my child, 'deed I am. 'Pears like the young folks nowdays don't think much 'bout their souls, an' I'm glad you're not forgettin' yourn. Dick was allus pious. But I'm forgettin' them papers. 'Pears to me I'm allus forgittin' things when I git to talkin' 'bout my boy. Come 'long to the house, it's too cold out here fer ye, an' ye can read them there jest as well."

The young ladies walked with the elder dame through the thick carpet of russet-brown leaves, entered the mossy-roofed cottage, and sat down in the old-fashioned parlor to await the information which poured into Isabel's willing ears like sweetest music, and drew forth ejaculations and prayers of gratitude for the timely salvation of her innocent mother.

* * * * *

A week later, Lawrence announced the necessity of returning to his home in town, and as he naturally supposed that Florence would continue her residence there, he expressed a desire for Charlie to accompany them, too. Charlie had not formed any definite arrangement for the disposal of his future time, but he declined, however, and said that he preferred to remain with his mother.

"But, Charles, you will be very dull here without Florence or—"

"Oh, I am not going, Uncle Lawrence," interposed Florence.

"Not going? Why, my dear, I had hoped you would make no changes regarding your home. I declare, I cannot so easily relinquish my claim upon you. My charge drew quite too heavily upon my heartstrings

for me to resign my guardianship so readily," Lawrence said, with unassuming earnestness.

"I thank you for such generosity, Uncle Lawrence, but if papa does not go I think I will stay here. I—Uncle Lawrence, I hope you understand me, I do not forget your goodness to me, and I love you just as dearly as ever, but—I should like to stay with papa. I have had him only such a little while, and, having your dear ones now, you will not miss me so much."

Lawrence put his arm about her and raised her face so that he might see her eyes. He regretted most heartily that he must give her up. She had been his sunshine and hope, for so many years that even the possession of his own lovely daughter did not compensate for the loss of Florence.

"I shall miss you, Florence, and I regret that you will no longer share my home, but I am happy, at the same time, to see you so happy with your father. I need not admonish you to be good to him, for you cannot be otherwise. Remember always, Floss"—here he dropped his voice so that no one should hear but Florence—"that you are daughter of one of the noblest men in the world. He is self-sacrificing and great. I think he was always misjudged and treated unfairly at home. But it was because no one knew him. He was as void of bigotry and selfishness as a saint, and that is why we never understood him. He never proclaimed his superior qualities before the world. I think," he said aloud, "you will find Charlie a more desirable father than I am."

"Isabel will have no cause to complain of her father unless she gets jealous of her mother," Florence observed, which directed all the amused glances at Isabel.

She came over to where Charles was standing, leaning indolently against the wall, and said :

“ Uncle Charlie, there are several reasons why it would be desirable for Florence and you to come to the city, but I will only mention one and that is the most selfish one of all. I want her, and I will need her. There, you need not smile. You will learn very soon that there is no use in trying to battle against two girls.” Charlie smiled drearily, and Florence came to them, crying:

“ Oh, Isabel, do not frighten me with such horrid pictures of futurity. I am going to be as docile as a lamb for a while, in order that he may accustom himself gradually.”

Charles certainly did not look much frightened as he clasped his hand over that of his daughter and looked admiringly into her face.

There was much jesting and mirth, and Adele joined the others in their attempt to urge him to accompany them; but it was at length decided that he would go.

They went on a morning train, arriving in the city at noon. They had all alighted, and were moving slowly with the throng toward the exit. A slight commotion ensued as the crowd coming in jostled against those going out, and a voice that came floating through the air, uttering words that made every pulse in the little party throb faster. Mrs. Russell was saying: “ My dear Walter, do you not see your friends—the Haynes? ” laying most insolent stress on the name.

No, Walter had not seen them, else her words would not have taken his breath away. He shot a hasty glance at each face, and, without replacing the hat he had lifted when he bowed to them, he passed on through the gate; but his eyes roved restlessly, and common-

place words, which he would have given worlds to utter, refused to come to his lips.

The triumphant look which Mrs. Russell had flung at the familiar faces told Adele only too plainly that she was the woman to whom Isabel had paid such a price for silence.

"Is that Mrs. Russell?" Adele whispered.

"Yes, my love, that is the woman who thinks she holds us in her power," Lawrence answered.

"We are in her power for poor Philip's sake," Adele rejoined, quietly.

"Yes, that is so. I doubt if Phil can ever be happy again."

"Her daughter is very beautiful," interposed Adele.

Charlie said not a word. He was grinding his teeth, and thinking but for this woman they might all be happy again; but as long as that secret hung like Damocles' sword over their heads they could not hope to be happy.

They spent the afternoon in quiet conversation, and made some suggestions relative to the house, which Lawrence wanted to remodel. In the course of the afternoon Charlie embraced the first opportunity to say to his daughter:

"Florence, I promised to show you Dayne's letter when it should have arrived. I received it this morning before leaving home. Read it and return it to me."

He affected oblivion to her agitation. Walking away, he lit a cigar, and was soon lost in smoky dreams, while Florence read and re-read the letter, laughed over it, sighed over it, cried over it, only to read it again, and this was a portion of the missive that opened the windows of her heart and let the gladsome sunshine of love pour

in “Regarding the *flaw* in the marriage, Uncle, I could not be persuaded to believe it, if *you* had not told me of it. I cannot conceive the possibility of this having been a mistake, when I took such pains to have everything done properly, as I have no desire to copy the fate of my poor misguided father. I should have done my utmost to make Isabel’s life less drear, had our lives been, as I believed, united—but can I make you understand, my dear uncle, what a weight of disappointment your letter lifts from my heart? I had other hopes and desires which were abandoned when I became Isabel’s husband. Now I may cherish them again. I feel assured you understand to what I refer? But I shall never feel at liberty to address Florence in that way until I am confident that I am free. My vacation begins in December, may I write Reynolds to meet me at home at that time? I stood in his way once; if I am free, I desire to make him that reparation.”

Florence’s heart beat almost to suffocation, as she read the words that convinced her that she reigned supreme in her husband’s heart—the husband who did not know he possessed so staunch a little wife.

“Ah, well,” sighed Florence, as she folded and replaced the letter, “it seems cruel to keep him in suspense when he has suffered so much, but I shall keep him in ignorance of the *gift* of a wife until he asks for it,” and the dimples chased each other in roguish glee over her face.

The days and weeks sped rapidly by until December snows were mantling the frosty ground, and whirling flakes of purity into the faces of expectant holiday shoppers. Mrs. Russell and Cora were often seen in the

great stores with numerous little parcels, suggestive of pretty decorative employment for Christmas-tide. Frequently they were seen passing Lawrence Hayne's residence, but only the coldest acknowledgment signified their former acquaintance. Cora was happily ignorant of the plot her mother had prepared against the Warwickhs; and as the former had explained the sudden terminus to this friendship, by a few adroit criticisms upon Mary's manner toward her at the time of her late visit, Cora had accepted it all in perfect trust, and though she retained a warm affection for Florence, it was not to be expected that she would tolerate the acquaintance of a family who had cut her mother.

Had Cora, conscientious and loyal as she was, suspected her mother of doing an injury at once so treacherous, and so contemptible, she would have been plunged into the deepest humiliation. To her, her mother was the embodiment of purity and Christian grace; and the discovery of her real character would, Mrs. Russell well knew, provoke pain, ten times greater in Cora's heart than would the loss of the lionized Walter.

One morning quite early a servant placed in Charles Hayne's hand a card bearing on its face the name of Dayne Warwick. Charlie bit his lip and lowered his eyes to conceal the amusement he felt at this early, impetuous visit. Opening the door of the drawing-room, his face relaxed into its broadest smile at the half serious, expectant face of his visitor.

"Hello, Dayne!" Charles said, abruptly, at the same time extending his hand in welcome. "When did you come down?"

"I only arrived this morning. You are amused at

my impatience. I may as well candidly assert that I can neither eat nor sleep until I am enlightened upon the subject of my strange marriage. I hope you will not keep me in suspense, Uncle Charlie?"

"Of course not, old boy; but I'm not at liberty to tell you any more than I told you in my letter. You are not bound by so much as a straw. Your marriage with Isabel is all nonsense; and that is all I can tell you. There! Your face fell a half inch. Brace up; don't look so despondent," Charles urged, demurely.

"Really, Uncle Charlie, your words are tantalizingly hopeful, but I might just as well try to find a lost minute as to imagine what intercession of Providence rescued us. I thought you would tell me," Dayne replied, ruefully. "Everything seemed proper; the papers must have been all right, and the ceremony satisfied even Mrs. Russell, so what in the name of fate interposed?"

"Dayne, some one interposed and effected an escape for Isabel and yourself. But you see the price of your father's folly is paid as long as you are supposed to be Isabel's husband. If it be discovered that a trick has been played, Mrs. Russell will expose your father to the whole community. Then what good is it going to do you to find yourself free? You see Reynolds would not dare pay his addresses to Isabel, and as for——"

"Just let me prove myself a free man, and I shall speak to Florence, with your permission, and if she regards me in something more than a cousinly fashion, I shall establish myself in business and wait until some dispensation relieves me of this irksome yoke of secrecy, then I shall begin my life in dead earnest and see what I can make of such a sorry beginning. May I see Flor-

ence and talk with her? Does she know the substance of this mystery?"

"I'm tempted to believe she does. You might ask her," Charles answered, while every muscle of his face quivered with mirth.

"Well, you are in a most mirthful mood, or you could not jest, so I shall not apprehend anything dismal. Pray send Florence to me soon, uncle."

Charles left the room and found Florence arranging a basket of flowers. The humor left his face, and a saddened expression replaced it. This would be the last time that he could claim an undisputed right to her; from this time hence, Dayne would have an equal right to her, even though it were not acknowledged, he might assert his claim if he chose.

"Quite an early call, papa; has your visitor gone?"

"Not yet. I am going to my box of papers. Some business matters," he replied, and stood toying with a rose that had fallen from the basket.

"Let me go and get it for you, papa. I think the keys are in my room."

"Well, you may then, dear," and when she had reached the foot of the stairs he called stealthily: "Flossie, bring them to the parlor, dear," and he smiled at her innocent answer, "Yes, papa."

CHAPTER XXX.

WEDDING BELLS.

Fair were the fields to-day, and thou had'st found me.

Hearest thou me, ah ! hearest thou me ?

Sweet were the bonds of love, and thou had'st bound me.

Hearest thou me, my love ?

Sweet is the sound of the redbreast's song

When the owl flies out from cover,

Sweetest is sleep, if the day be long,

But love is best—true love is best,

Ah ! hearest thou that, my lover ?

THE few minutes that elapsed before Florence appeared at the door of the drawing-room seemed to Dayne hours and hours, but at length his suspense was ended, for Florence, bright and bonny, stood on the threshold, with a box of papers in one hand, a basket of roses in the other, and a pair of brown eyes dilated to their full extension with surprise.

The meeting promised to prove an embarrassment to both. Florence set the box on a table and went forward to meet her cousin, smiling her happiest smile and offering her pretty plump hand in welcome. Dayne strode eagerly to her side, took the basket from her hand, and set it upon a chair, then, seizing both her hands, asked, in eagerness :

“ Are you glad to see me, Florence ? ”

With her usual gayety, she replied :

"Wait until I recover from my surprise, then I will tell you," but beneath the reckless answer was a perceptible earnestness that did not escape Dayne's notice.

"Recover then, immediately, for I am fairly consumed with anxiety for some information regarding this strange freak of destiny. Your father said you were acquainted with the circumstances, and could doubtless tell me all about it. Can you, Floss?"

"Yes, I know all about it."

"Then sit here, and tell it to me, I must know it now."

They sat down upon a sofa where Dayne could command a perfect view of her face. She looked demurely at him, as she tied and untied the ribbons on her dress.

"Need **you** know it now, Dayne? There are so many things to talk about, and this story is so long."

"Long or short, Floss, let me hear it now. What better time could we find for a confidential chat than now? I am confident you understand the reason why I am so anxious about this flaw? You surely know that it is because it prevents me from fulfilling the greatest desire of my life—that is to make **you** my wife. That is what made the marriage worse than death to me. I love you so dearly, Florence, so earnestly and passionately, that I would rather face the most pitiless enemy than to know that I was irrevocably bound to another woman, even though she be our lovely Isabel," he said, in passionate haste.

"My father, surely, convinced you that you are perfectly free, so far as Isabel is concerned?" Florence ventured, with the hope that Dayne would grasp at the last clause and recognize the delicate hint it conveyed,

but in Dayne's present mood, nothing but the plainest language could imprint its meaning upon his brain.

"Yes, I must be convinced that I am free, otherwise I should scorn to speak to you of my love; but you must tell me the truth—the whole circumstance—I want proof of the mistake so that I can ask you the one question that is burning clear through my heart. Answer me now, Florence. Would you marry me if something laid an unobstructed pathway to that event? Would you be my wife, Floss? We used to be so candid with each other, and it was my undivided intention to acknowledge our betrothal as soon as our age would permit it reasonably. Now you have seen other men, eligible men, too. Have you seen one, Floss, you could love better than me?"

"No, not one," she answered, gently.

"And your heart **is** all mine, Florence, all mine?" he cried, eagerly.

"Yes, it is all yours."

"Then you will marry me when I can effect a compromise with Mrs. Russell? Will you, darling?"

Florence left her seat and crossed over to the window. Coming back she laid her hand on Dayne's upturned brow, as he looked questioningly into her face for his answer.

"Dayne," she began, "it will take so long to explain the incident, but the truth is, I—I am your wife now."

He sprang to his feet in bewilderment, and caught her hands in his own.

"I don't understand you. There is no trifling in your countenance. You are in earnest, but I can't understand."

"No, as I told you, Dayne, it is a long story. But

to make it explicit, I will tell you that, after you asked Isabel to marry you, she fell in a dead faint in our room, and as I had overheard every word—I did not try to listen, indeed, Dayne, I did not," she urged with a shamed countenance.

"Go on, I know you did not."

"I could not help hearing it, and while Isabel lay upstairs raving and calling for some one to help her I went to the arbor and married you."

"But, my love, the *papers*; they all bore Isabel's name," Dayne reiterated with blanched cheeks.

"Oh, I had that all arranged. I visited Squire Jason, and got his promise to substitute my name for Isabel's, and as you brought your mother in at the library door, I let myself out at Squire Jason's front door. You see I got there first."

"Oh, Flossie, are you sure the papers bore your name? Are they properly filled out?"

"You can see for yourself. I have carried our certificate next my heart all these days, and have read it by sunlight, twilight, moonlight, and gaslight, until I could repeat it *verbatim* backwards. Don't make my position any more humiliating, Dayne, than it already is. Heaven knows it is not a comfortable one," and her bright brown eyes grew misty, but pride restrained the tears.

"Humiliating? darling, what a name for such heroism. Why, the moment my mind can grasp the conviction of the validity of these papers, I shall be the happiest man on the globe, and the proudest husband. Don't cry, Florence, I am a brute to have expressed the least doubt; but God knows, my dear, I would not have the least suspicion of a flaw in *our* marriage. Your fair

name must not be subjected to the trial that Aunt Adele's has been. Why, Flossie, I shall have something to live for now ; something to incite my ambition. Even though our marriage cannot be made public, for a time, we shall be happy in each other's love, knowing that we belong to each other, 'for weal or for woe,' my precious, heroic little wife. Think of that Floss, my wife ! Is it not too good to be true ? "

"Oh, don't mention heroism ! There was nothing heroic about it. I presume some might think I had sinister motives in doing as I did, but I had not. My actions were too impulsive to be anything but disinterested. Of course, Dayne, this marriage must be kept a dead secret, and even if there are no obstacles in our way, some day we will have another ceremony, just as if nothing of this kind had ever occurred. I only did it to satisfy Mrs. Russell." Dayne drew her down upon the sofa, and drank in her words, wondering meanwhile how he should ever make her understand how passionately he adored her, or how intensely happy he was.

" You are perfectly right, my sweet, about the ceremony. I can't realize how I could stand at your side and hold your hand while Squire Jason bound us together and not recognize you, and give you a most emphatic embrace there in that old, dark arbor. Why, Floss, I asked you if you were so very miserable, and I remember your answer, 'Not so very miserable, Dayne, but I wish it were otherwise,' and I did not recognize my prize," he exclaimed, kissing her warmly.

" I was *not* so miserable as one might imagine ; but I was so frightened lest I should be found out."

After they had conversed several minutes upon sub-

jects that Dayne's marriage had excluded from them, Dayne said :

"You see, Floss, we might openly defy Mrs. Russell, and get married again, but that would disgrace father, and his disgrace must be shared by all of us. Until there is some way to effectually hide father's shame, you shall never share my name—"

"Oh, Dayne, I——"

"Yes, darling, I know you would accept it, just as bravely as you took it that night——"

"When you had offered it to another girl!" she answered, roguishly.

A half hour later, Charles Hayne had been summoned and entered the room with a face bearing unmistakable traces of agitation. The pair of happy faces that smiled at him as he entered the room made his heart ache tenfold more sorely. But he took their hands and blessed them in his brusque fashion, and listened to Dayne's rapturous expressions of admiration and joy ; and no one knew the weariness and regret he felt at finding himself once more *alone*. What a brief, happy dream his reunion with his child had been, and now—well, her happiness was the balm that took the smart from the wound.

Two days later Mrs. Russell, sitting in her boudoir, was addressed by a maid, who said that old mad Jule was at the kitchen door and begged for something to eat.

"Mad Jule?" interrogated Mrs. Russell. "I supposed the poor old witch was dead long ago. I'm sure old Nettie thinks she is. Give her something to eat, poor old thing!"

But after she had dismissed the maid her curiosity to

see this poor demented creature prompted her to go to the kitchen, where she found Julia eating from a plate heaped with palatable remnants from the dinner.

"How do you do, Julia? Where have you kept yourself hidden so long?"

"I'se ben down to the ole Reed Place, but got so col' I like to froze, Mis Russell," Julia answered.

"Is not that the Haunted Hall, Julia?"

"Yaas ; I reckon they does call it thet, but thar haint' ben no ghosts round sence I'se ben thar." Then her mind suddenly lost the subject, and her eyes rolled about the room, and her hand sought the pocket of her old tattered gown and fumbled about nervously, while she made guttural sounds and talked incoherently, much to Mrs. Russell's annoyance, for since Julia had mentioned the old Reed Place as her recent habitation Mrs. Russell began to take a lively interest in her uncouth guest.

"What have you in your pocket, Julia?" she asked, kindly.

Julia tittered idiotically and replied : "I can't fin' it no place, an' them thar spooks must have carried it off. Kase I put it thar shoah."

"Put it where, Julia?"

"He, he ! ye can't git dis chile ter do nuffin, 'thout munny, Mass Warruck—nuffin 'thout payin' shuh 'nuff munny. I do that dis hyar minut' fer munny. See it ? Thet's tha munny he give me, when I done gon and tuk them thar papers. He, he, he ! Ole Massa Mooh, he jes shet thar doah right slam bang in dis chile's face, he did." Then she threw her head back and laughed a demoniac laugh that thrilled Mrs. Russell's sensitive nerves with horror.

"Let me see your money, Julia. May I count it? What a pretty box; let me see it."

"Thet thar box is full uv munny—shuh 'nuff munny, too. Them papers was in thar, too, sumpin got 'em. Mus' ben them ghos." She scratched her head and fumbled about her dress again. "Got s'more papers, too. Jes got em las' night. Ole Prue she don go crazy shuh when she fin' dem papers am gon. He, he, he! she's mighty scairt 'bout dis time, she am."

"Why, how did you get these papers, Julia? How pretty! let me see them."

"He, he! Ye see, Mis Russell, Ole Prue she was a-readin uv em an a-crying like eberyting, an she neber know'd dat I 'us right dar close by like, an when she hed cried 'nuff she jest got up an says, says she: 'Oh, Philip Warruck, may the Lawd forgive yoah powful sin.' Ole Miss Prue, I guess ye spill no moah tears on dese hyar papahs. He, he!"

Mrs. Russell seized the papers, and when Julia relapsed into one of her dreamy musings, in which she chattered, utterly oblivious to all about her, carried them into her own room. She had no sooner sat down in her accustomed seat at the window, than Julia's coarse, gruff voice said close to her ear: "Gimme dem papahs, Mis Russell."

"Julia, you have done a very wicked thing in stealing these papers from Mrs. Wells, and I shall return them to her."

"No ye won', Mis Russell, no ye won'."

"Go away now, Julia, don't you know you might be put in prison for taking these? You would better get away now, as fast as you can, or I shall report you to

the authorities. "Go now this minute!" Mrs. Russell pointed menacingly to the door.

"Ye kin, uv coase, have me 'rested fer dat, but ye won'. I knose dat ye won'. See if ye does," and with a grin that Mrs. Russell would have given much to understand, Julia went out of the house, showing every tooth in her ill-shaped mouth with her hideous laugh.

When the door closed upon her unkempt person, Mrs. Russell drew a deep breath of relief and exclaimed :

"There, Miss Isabel, I understand that Walter has called twice to see you, but I guess he will not call again," and with a triumphant smile she placed the papers in her bosom and resumed her embroidery.

That evening Charles Hayne, Philip Warwich and a real estate agent left the city on an evening train, arriving at Hayne Home at nine o'clock. They had gone to investigate a piece of land adjoining Hayne Home, which Charles hoped to purchase. They found the house deserted, but the doors were unlocked and the appearance within indicated a sudden exit. They started to walk over to Wicksburr, but had gone but a short distance when streaks of lurid flame brightened the sky in the direction of Philip's former home.

"Look!" he exclaimed, "there is fire, and it is certainly my house," and he quickened his pace, while the two companions added that in all probability there was where John and Prudence had gone.

Philip fairly glided over the frosty ground until he was within a few yards of the handsome residence, which was a mass of flame, when he unexpectedly ran against Mrs. Russell, running frantically about, crying and wringing her hands in direst distress.

"Oh, Mr. Warwick, for God's sake save my child! Oh, save her! save her, I pray you save——"

"Where is she, quick, Mrs. Russell! Where is she?" at the same time throwing off his coat.

"Upstairs. Ah, she is being burned alive! That water cannot quench such a fire, some one save her! Oh, Cora, Cora!"

"Get me a ladder here, quick! There, put it up at that window!"

"Oh, Mr. Warwick!" cried a dozen voices, "you never can get to that window alive. That room——"

"Hold this ladder, and watch for me, I say!" and while some prayed, others called him a maniac, and others, of the women and children, ran away to hide from the sight, as he ascended the ladder amid smoke so thick and stifling that he had to close his eyes and grope his way to the window and into the room where, after fighting smoke with all his might, he succeeded in reaching the prostrate form of the beautiful Cora Russell, and said to himself, "I am too late, she has suffocated; but I'll carry her form unscathed to her frantic mother," and just at this juncture a fierce cloud of flame shot into the room, and a wall on the opposite side of the house fell in. The crowd without screamed, and watched with horror-stricken faces for the figure of the man who had risked his life to save the daughter of his bitterest foe. When he at last reached the window the flames were leaping and dancing in fiendish joy over the ruin they were making. Philip called out, "Steady, boys!" and started down the creaking ladder, with his fair burden lying a limp, helpless mass across his chest.

How he reached the ground he never knew; for when a few feet above the anxious crowd, he swayed and

would have fallen had not Charlie Hayne sprung up the rounds and taken the unconscious burden from his arms, while strong men caught his falling form, and carried him off to restore him. His face was seared and blackened. His hair was a mass of ashes, and his hands were frightfully burned. It was evident that life was not extinct. Philip was wholly unconscious of his sufferings.

When the people gathered about the prostrate form of Cora, and rejoiced in the gladness of her salvation, some enthusiastic member of the appalled assembly proposed three cheers for Philip. This was responded to with such lusty yells that the unconscious hero opened his eyes, bent them upon Charlie's face, and dreamily inquired : "What is all this fuss about, and what is the matter with me?"

"The fuss, Phil, is a rude ovation to your heroic deed. You saved Cora Russell's life, my boy."

When Mrs. Russell had been moved to Wicksburr, with Cora, the former was soon brought to consciousness ; but before Philip had regained his injured sight, or emerged from the room where he had first been carried, Cora, beautiful, petted, idolized Cora, died ; and her grief-crazed mother thereafter sought to quench her sorrow by making, as nearly as possible, some reparation for the misery she had caused these unhappy people. She would nurse Philip back to health. Not one thing that willing hands could do was left undone toward his comfort and ease. When friends remonstrated with her, and told her she was ruining her own health with loss of sleep and nervous grief, she replied that this was all she could do to repay her debt of gratitude for his heroic service. But in her own room,

when she offered prayers to heaven for his restoration, she called it an atonement for the grief she had inflicted.

But the hours of convalescence were tedious and long, and it was during this period of anxious care that Mrs. Russell and Mary grew to love each other with all their hearts. One day, when Phil was pronounced almost well, and sat in a chair by the lace-draped window, Mrs. Russell told them of the visit from Mad Jule, explained the motive she had in keeping the papers, and made a confession so full and free, and begged so humbly and contritely for their pardon, that they loved her for her open confession and for the good that she had done. When the secret marriage of Florence was told her, and, subsequently, the engagement of Isabel and Walter, none rejoiced more sincerely than Mrs. Russell, nor offered congratulations and wishes more kindly than she.

Thus, through the intercession of Charlie, a boy whose brusque and unpolished exterior won for him only tolerance for his eccentricities, through his ingenuity a woman's most sacred dower, her fair name, was protected from the taint of a lawless marriage. Then again, the child whom God in His wisdom threw into the lap of its parents, manifested the same true spirit of right, and baffled an intriguing woman by flinging her life, unasked, "between two souls "as wide betwixt as heaven and earth," paving thereby the pathway to happiness, that so deservingly lies before our friends at Hayne Home.

* * * * *

The magnificent residence of Lawrence Hayne is brilliantly illumined. The odor of flowers is wafted through the open windows and borne upon the sweet

June air, melting in intoxicating sweetness with the joyous strains of a wedding march.

Two fair young girls, with proud, queenly carriage, each leaning trustingly upon the arm of a handsome cavalier, pause beneath gorgeous festoons of flowers while the service is read which binds each pair of hearts

Close as twin stars in azure setting.

Everyone seems happy. Adele and Lawrence advance together to bless their child and her beloved Walter. Tears glistened brightly on Adele's sweet, fair face, as she prays that God will pour into her child's life the sweetness that was denied her, and Walter's answer is sweet to her mother-heart: "Heaven grant that we may never cause you sadder tears."

Charles Hayne leads Frederic Moore across to the flower-like brides. The latter smiles as he has not done in years, and says holding a hand of each of the brides:

"This is the first time that I have ever looked on the brightest side of life without feeling the shadow of the darkest. After so many years of heartache, I pray God we may all be at peace together." And Florence replies, gaily: "There would be much less heartache, dear Mr. Moore, if we could all say truthfully, as Riley has said:

It aint no use to grumble and complain,
It's just as cheap and easy to rejoice;
When God sorts out the weather and sends rain;
W'y, rain's my choice."

AUTHOR'S NOTE.—The author can only say in conclusion that all the characters not disposed of gained health, strength and pleasure from adopting the popular pastime of bicycle riding. The bicycle has within a few years been adopted by doctors, lawyers, clergymen, merchants; by ladies as well as gentlemen. It is worth a thousand times more than any health device ever invented and its continued use instead of becoming irksome is a source of continually increasing pleasure. It is a difficult task to select from the many makes of bicycles just the one that is suited to one's fancies and needs. Anyone contemplating the purchase of a bicycle will do well to investigate the matter thoroughly. This can be done in no better way than by consulting one of the papers devoted to cycling such as **THE BEARINGS** (one dollar a year), published at 71 Randolph street, Chicago, by N. H. Van Sicklen and Geo. K. Barrett, two of the oldest and best-known wheelmen in America. It contains cuts and descriptions of all the leading makes of cycles.

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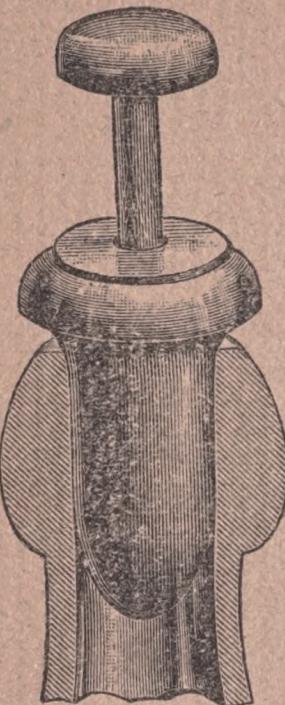
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